

# ARM Prison Outreach International

"Ministers' Minute" Volume 8 Number 11

**SERIES: "AN ETERNAL EDUCATION FROM ECCLESIASTES"**

**or "Answers to Life's Toughest Questions"**

**SERMON # 6 - "How Do I Deal with the Bad Times?" (A)**

**Ecclesiastes 3**

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Editor's Note: This "MM" is the eleventh email message of 2009 in a series that ARM is sending as an encouragement to preachers, chaplains, and Christian workers around the world. This issue is the 95th "MM" sent. All are archived -- just [click here](#) to see links to all messages sent since January of 2002.

This month's message is the sixth of a series as we study Ecclesiastes. It is my prayer that this message will encourage you and those you teach, lead, and encourage.

May God bless your labors! -- Rod Farthing, Development Director

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**"How Do I Deal with the Bad Times?" (A)**

**Ecclesiastes 3**

One day there was a bomb scare in Rio Rancho, NM, at a gas station. Of course the bomb squad had to be called out to investigate, which in turn brought a newspaper reporter. In the local paper the next day they had a picture of a bomb squad member, wearing a shirt that said:

*"I am a bomb technician. If you see me running, try and keep up!"*

**EVER FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE TROUBLE KEEPING UP?**

Most of us feel, some days, like we have trouble keeping up!

America has more time-saving devices, yet we're more hurried than anyone else. Ever caught yourself standing in front of the microwave and yelling,

**"HURRY UP!"**

**I'M TOLD THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CARS MARKETED IN AMERICA AND THOSE SOLD IN EUROPE. Cars marketed in Europe don't have cup holders. If they want to eat, Europeans stop, go in, sit down, and eat.**

**We realize how precious time is: Tough question: "How can I make the most of my time?"**

**We're not going to deal with doing twice the work in half the time. Most of our schedules are already too crammed! Instead, we will talk about how to make the most of our bad times.**

**We can find five attitudes from Eccl. 3; we look at the first two in this lesson.**

***Eccl 3:1 There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven: 2 a time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot, 3 a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to tear down and a time to build, 4 a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance, 5 a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them, a time to embrace and a time to refrain, 6 a time to search and a time to give up, a time to keep and a time to throw away, 7 a time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak, 8 a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and a time for peace. (NIV)***

**I. Accept the fact that God has a purpose for both the good and bad times of your life.**

**3:1 "...a time for everything..." God doesn't do anything by accident. He has a purpose and a plan for all that happens.**

**Solomon mentions 14 contrasts that compose a cross section of life. Let's look at this famous list:**

**3:2 Your Birth date and funeral date are beyond your control.**

**3:3,4 Mourning and laughter. Preachers get invited to both kinds of occasions. Roller coaster ride from nursery to nursing home.**

**3:5,6 'Garage sale' verse: Two kinds of people -- Pitchers and hoarders. Sparks fly when they marry each other.**

**3:7 Tearing clothes was a sign of grief. It takes wisdom to have the courage to speak when you should -- and the love to be silent when you should.**

**3:8 Hate here refers to hating actions, not people.**

**We should hate sin ... injustice, prejudice, killing the unborn, abuse, divorce.**

God hates divorce (Mal. 2:11) but loves both the perpetrators and victims of divorce.

All of these positives and negatives have a place in your life. Ecclesiastes 3:11a

He has made everything beautiful in its time. (NKJV) Not in its own way -- in its own time!

It isn't always pleasant, but it is appropriate and God has a purpose for each event. Everything? Yes! Financial loss, Personal loss. If we had our own way, we would always have pleasant circumstances and end up being spoiled brats.

God can bring good out of the bad as easily as He can from the good. Just look at Joseph's story in Genesis 37-50.

All of life fits into the plan of God for you -- even the mundane tasks of life.

## **II. Affirm your faith in God in bad times.**

Times can be really confusing for us. Bad times will make us BETTER OR BITTER. Affirming our faith and accenting our faith can make us BETTER.

Wasn't Paul's faith FAR STRONGER after his trials? Just listen to his words in 2 Timothy 4.6-8:

*6 For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure.*

*7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

*8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

A young preacher died in 1999 at the age of 44 in the prime of his ministry. WHY? One friend said, "God has got a lot of explaining to do." But faith brought that preacher's friend through their grief.

## **Ecclesiastes 3:11b**

**He has given us a desire to know the future, but never gives us the ability to fully understand what He does.**

**One college professor said in a funeral sermon, "We don't know what God's purpose is, but we believe that He knows!"**

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**Consider Habakkuk 1:5**

**"Then the LORD said to his people, 'Keep watching the nations around you, and you will be astonished at what you see. I am going to do something that you will not believe when you hear about it.'"**

**In other words, we couldn't understand even if God did explain it! Therefore we must learn to trust God when we don't understand the "WHY'S."**

**Does a young child understand when a parent explains the science of why you shouldn't lick a metal pole on a bitterly cold day? Would you understand nuclear fission if a nuclear scientist explained it to you? For that matter... **WOULD HE??****

**We question the Process, but God works all things toward the Product!**

**Cocoon vs. butterfly; external vs. eternal; wrapping paper vs. the gift; short term vs. the long term.**

**John 13.7: *Jesus answered him, "You do not understand now what I am doing, but you will understand later."***

**When I was a little boy, my mother used to embroider a great deal. I would sit at her knee and look up from the floor and ask what she was doing. She informed me that she was embroidering. I told her that it looked like a mess from where I was. As from the underside I watched her work within the boundaries of the little round hoop that she held in her hand, I complained to her that it sure looked messy from where I sat. She would smile at me, look down and gently say, "My son, you go about your playing for awhile, and when I am finished with my embroidering, I will put you on my knee and let you see it from my side."**

I would wonder why she was using some dark threads along with the bright ones and why they seemed so jumbled from my View. A few minutes would pass and then I would hear Mother's voice say, "Son, come and sit on my knee." This I did only to be surprised and thrilled to see a beautiful flower or a sunset. I could not believe it, because from underneath it looked so messy. Then Mother would say to me, "My son, from underneath it did look messy and jumbled, but you did not realize that there was a pre-drawn plan on the top. It was a design. I was only following it. Now look at it from my side and you will see what I was doing."

Many times through the years I have looked up to my Heavenly Father and said, "Father, what are You doing?" He has answered, "I am embroidering your life." I say, "But it looks like a mess to me. It seems so jumbled. The threads seem so dark." The Father seems to tell me, "My child, you go about your business of doing My business, and one day I will bring you to Heaven and put you on My knee and you will see the plan from My side." (Author unknown)

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### ARM's Websites

[www.arm.org](http://www.arm.org)   [www.abarc.org](http://www.abarc.org)   [www.raphahouse.org](http://www.raphahouse.org)

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*"Remain faithful unto death .." Rev. 2:10B*

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**Rod Farthing, ARM National Development Director**   [rodfar@arm.org](mailto:rodfar@arm.org)  
**3127 Highway K, Salem, MO 65560**