



God made it crooked

"Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked?"

(Ecclesiastes 7:13)

Solomon sounds irreverent to our ears, accusing God of having made things crooked! Doesn't that fly in the face of Scripture's insistence that God is good? Is it fitting for any creature to say of the Creator that his work is "perverted," as the word is translated elsewhere?

God didn't create this world as a broken place. The Holy Spirit tells us God's own evaluation of everything he made: *"It was very good."* But God built into the world the possibility of death. I say that because of God's instruction to Adam; he could help himself to every tree except that one, and God said, *"When you eat of it you shall surely die"* (Gen 2:17).

In the weeks that followed, Adam and Eve rebelled against God. How should God respond? Perhaps he could ignore it, and leave man in Paradise in continued bliss. Perhaps God could destroy the world in an instant decree of de-creation, and start again. Perhaps God could send his Son immediately into this fallen world to atone for sin, destroy Satan, and restore Paradise.

In divine righteousness God opted for none of the above. Instead he ordained a world of enmity, where life would be characterized by pain, unwholesome desires, thorns, sweat, and dust. It was a world exiled from God's grace.

The result? Adam and Eve knew the grief of burying a son. Lamech's wives cringed under the arrogance of the brute that was their husband. The many on earth in Noah's days perished in the flood. Abram was childless till old age. Isaac saw his son swindle him.

Joseph was hauled across the desert with a noose around his neck. Even when God delivered his people from bondage and came to dwell among them, grumbling and bitterness continued. In the Promised Land – surely, that was Paradise restored! – God's hand of judgment pressed upon the people because of their idolatry. In Solomon's own day, when the people ate and drank and were happy, *"each man under his own vine and fig tree"* (1 Kings 4:25), there were still the tears of funerals, the pains of marriage tensions, the anguish of wayward children – even the selfishness of two women fighting over a living child. Life was so crooked, so broken – as God had ordained it to be in response to the fall!

Who can fix it? The people of Israel had the wisest king who ever lived. Surely, Solomon could fix it! He couldn't. Despite all his wisdom, his own heart turned from the Lord. Could the code of Hammurabi set straight what was crooked? Or the wisdom of Aristotle? Or the power of Alexander the Great? Or the peace of the Romans? Can science or philosophy or education? The list of human initiatives is endless, and all has been tried. But none of it ultimately helps to straighten what's crooked in this broken life because God has made it crooked, and who can withstand his work? Day by day it's his heavy hand that presses upon human life in righteous response to our rebellion in the beginning – and who can squeeze out from under that divine hand so we no longer feel its crushing weight? Fighting God is such a senseless waste of effort. We share the hopelessness Solomon's audience felt at his words: if even Solomon can't make straight what God has made crooked, we're forever doomed to this life of injustice, crookedness, and tears.

Who can make straight what God made crooked? That's something God himself can do! It's what he promised in the same breath when he spoke of enmity, that the seed of the woman would crush

the head of the serpent. The pain, brokenness, and crookedness of life would ultimately become a means that holy God would use to have his Son unjustly nailed to the cross so atonement might be made for sin and the crooked set straight!

"All things work together for good," Paul tells the Romans; the *"all things"* includes the crookedness, brokenness, and injustice we're so used to, and that we decry. *"Today,"* said Jesus as he groaned under the heavy hand of God's justice, *"you will be with me in paradise"* (Luke 23:43). And it was so, for the crooked criminal was made straight!

What Christ achieved is in principle ours. Already tears can be turned to laughter, the comfortless can be comforted, the victims of injustice receive relief. Already the hurt is out of the remaining crookedness. In faith we eagerly await the day when there shall be no more tears at all, no more grief, injustice, nothing crooked any longer! How glorious the gospel: Injustice shall not have the last word, because God himself straightens what he made crooked.

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