



“Better”

Eccl. 7:1-14

June 21, 2020

Eccl 7:1-6

- 1** A good name is better than a good ointment,
And the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth.

2 It is better to go to a house of mourning

Than to go to a house of feasting,

Because that is the end of every man,

And the living takes it to heart.

3 Sorrow is better than laughter,

For when a face is sad a heart may be happy.

4 The mind of the wise is in the house of mourning,

While the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure.

5 It is better to listen to the rebuke of a wise man

Than for one to listen to the song of fools.

6 For as the crackling of thorn bushes under a pot,

So is the laughter of the fool;

And this too is futility.

1 A good name is better than a good ointment,

And the day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth.

“good name” = reputation.

“better” – used 8 times in these 14 verses, and Solomon is teaching us that one situation is preferred over another.

- Sometimes it is prosperity that is preferred and sometimes it is adversity that is preferred.

- This is teaching by contrast and comparison.

“ointment” - שָׁחָהּ - shehmen - liquid, oil, ointment.

- Precious oil usually came from the olive.

- In Israel's culture it was used for 1. the bathing of an infant in oil at birth (Ez. 16:9) 2. protecting and nurturing the body to provide relief from muscle soreness, dry skin, and other conditions. 3. a luxury provided by the possession of significant wealth. 4. the preparation of a corpse for burial.

- The second part of the verse sheds light on which of the 4 to use.

- The contrast is between birth and death. So the fragrance of the olive oil at birth is short-lived, maybe a day. It is applied with hope but can't guarantee any results. However a good reputation will continue to have an influence a long time into the future after one's death.

Prov 10:7

7 The memory of the righteous is blessed,

But the name of the wicked will rot.

Prov 22:1

2 A good name is to be more desired than great wealth,

- Solomon is contrasting 2 significant days in human experience. The day you receive your name at birth and the day you show up in the obituary column.

- The life lived between those two events will determine whether that name leaves behind the pleasant fragrance of a good reputation or the foul stench of a bad reputation.

- So the day of death is better if one has developed a good reputation for oneself.

- How does one develop a good reputation? By living a wise life. Honesty, integrity, and generosity in life are more valuable than the most expensive funeral.

- Judas Iscariot was born and given the good name Judah which means “praise”. By the time Jesus died, he turned that honorable name into something shameful.

- How does your reputation “smell” today?

2 Cor 2:15-16

15 For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing;

16 to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life.

Ecc1 7:1-6

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2 It is better to go to a house of mourning

Than to go to a house of feasting,

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- Better to go to a funeral than at a party.
- People listen much better at funerals than at weddings
- Solomon tells us that there are benefits to sorrow and mourning.
- Death has the potential to awaken us spiritually.
- Sorrow makes us think about life, its meaning, and our priorities. A party rarely does.
- Sorrow and suffering often brings one to God, while pleasure seldom does.
- Going to a party can produce some existential happiness. But what a party cannot produce is wisdom.
- Wise people go to funerals and pay attention. Wise people see themselves in the casket. Wise people think about the shortness of life. Wise people number their days and make the most of their time. Wise people see that there is still time to examine their lives, to make changes, to confess sin, and to plan ahead to invest their lives for eternity.
- The 10,000 year rule.
- Every funeral anticipates your own.
- The basic reason the adverse situation is better is because it makes us thoughtful and it develops wisdom in us.

3 Sorrow is better than laughter,

For when a face is sad a heart may be happy.

- We don't reflect on life and gain wisdom when we are laughing. We only do so when we are in sorrow.
- Sorrow can do more for the heart because it provokes us to thought and thought produces wisdom.
- "For when a face is sad, it is better for the heart."
- Why? Because it produces wisdom.

4 The mind of the wise is in the house of mourning,

While the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure.

- This is someone who is thinking about death and the end of life.
- Like old churches built in New England.
- The wise see a need to be thoughtful, to reflect on life. How much time do I have? Do I have the assurance of my salvation? Am I making my life count for God? Am I dealing with the sin in my life? How am I handling temptation? What does death teach me? What if it were me? What about my friends, relatives, children, parents who will all die one day? Do they know Christ? Where do I need to make changes?
- Fools think only of the pleasure that makes them feel good. I love to party. Everyone is laughing. This is a blast. Let's keep drinking. I'm getting high. Turn up the music. The food is great. I feel sooooo good.
- Thinking about death can be a good thing. Consider Alfred Nobel.

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Here is an example of verse 5:

- The thorn bushes were the kindling used to start a fire under a cooking pot. The kindling crackled as it caught fire, but it burned out quickly so that it was no use in heating the pot.
- The humor and laughter of fools possesses an equally fleeting benefit. It is useless. It doesn't develop anything in you. It makes a lot of noise but it doesn't do anything for you.
- Futility here should be translated "useless."
- Therefore, it is better to receive a rebuke from a wise man than to constantly be flattered by fools.

7 For oppression makes a wise man mad, And a bribe corrupts the heart.

- Both oppression and bribery seem like simple solutions and a quick fix to adversity.
- Men become impatient and use their authority to oppress others as a way of dealing with adversity.
- And by doing that his reputation will be destroyed and he will become a madman, a crazy fool.
- Remember: **Easy Routes become Expensive Detours.**
- Bribes are given to hurt those who tell the truth & help those who oppose it.
- Taking a bribe reveals a lot about the heart of a man.
- Everyone has a price, but those who are truly wise cannot be bought at any price.
- How much can you be bought for?
- *The answer is to be patient and God will provide the solution and the man will preserve his reputation.*

5 It is better to listen to the rebuke of a wise man Than for one to listen to the song of fools.

- Not many people like a rebuke.
- But God has sent the wise man with the rebuke. He has sent him to improve our lives.
- It is something we probably need to hear. And it is necessary for our improvement.
- Notice: This is praise that is coming from a fool.
- The words "listen to the song of fools" means these fools are speaking "praise" or "flattery."
- We all like to hear words of praise.
- However, it is better to get corrected than it is to get praise.

7 For oppression makes a wise man mad, And a bribe corrupts the heart.

- 8 The end of a matter is better than its beginning; Patience of spirit is better than haughtiness of spirit.
 - 9 Do not be eager in your heart to be angry, For anger resides in the bosom of fools.
 - 10 Do not say, "Why is it that the former days were better than these?" For it is not from wisdom that you ask about this.
 - 11 Wisdom along with an inheritance is good And an advantage to those who see the sun.
 - 12 For wisdom is protection just as money is protection, But the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the lives of its possessors.
 - 13 Consider the work of God, For who is able to straighten what He has bent?
 - 14 In the day of prosperity be happy, But in the day of adversity consider —God has made the one as well as the other So that man will not discover anything that will be after him.
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8 *The end of a matter is better than its beginning; Patience of spirit is better than haughtiness of spirit.*

- Difficult matters, that we all go through, make the endings better than the beginnings.
- So what is the key in getting through it?
- “Better is length of spirit than height of spirit.”
- Proud people are impatient because they think they’re too important to wait.
- God is interested in character development so He will test our patience to develop perseverance.
- Life is a marathon, not a sprint.
- God is building patience in us so that we will go the distance.

“My Christian friend, the very worst thing that can happen to you can very well be the very best thing that can happen to you. But it will take some time for you to see it.”

- Charles Spurgeon

“Second only to suffering, waiting may be the greatest teacher and trainer in godliness, maturity, and genuine spirituality most of us ever encounter.”

-Richard Hendrix

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9 *Do not be eager in your heart to be angry, For anger resides in the bosom of fools.*

- Adversity can lead to impatience which can lead to anger.
- We want prosperity from God but not adversity.
- But if we get angry we only reveal that we are not accepting adversity from God.

Job 2:10

- 10 Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?"
- The fool is not living in reality. In reality, both come from God and both are for our own good.
 - Anger will destroy your reputation before both God and men.
 - It is not other people or God that is the problem. It is your response to adversity from God that is the problem.

10 Do not say, "Why is it that the former days were better than these?" For it is not from wisdom that you ask about this.

- Adversity tempts us to live in the past.
- The fool wishes for a return to the past where things surely were better than they are in the present.
- The "good old days" are the combination of a bad memory & a good imagination.
- It's called "selective memory."
- We are living today, and the plan of God is for today, and we must live in His plan today.

"While you were dreaming of the future or regretting the past, the present, which is all you have, slips from you and is gone."

Joseph Hilaire Belloc
Victorian Essayist

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11 Wisdom along with an inheritance is good And an advantage to those who see the sun.

"good" - טוב - better, good, glad, joyful.

- "Wisdom is better than an inheritance And an advantage to those who see the sun."
- Wisdom comes to someone as the result of gaining knowledge and understanding from God.

Prov 2:6

6 For the Lord gives wisdom;

From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.

- Those who "see the sun" are the living.
- Better to pursue wisdom than an inheritance which can be short-lived and squandered with nothing to show for it.

12 For wisdom is protection just as money is protection, But the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the lives of its possessors.

- Wisdom is like money in that it serves as a protection against adversity.

- Money may run out but wisdom won't.

- Biblical wisdom involves right teaching (knowledge from Scripture) that produces right thinking, resulting in right choices that make for right living.

- Wisdom is the skill to live well. And to live well is to accept adversity and prosperity as coming from the hand of God.

- Therefore wisdom will preserve and prolong your life.

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- 13 Consider the work of God, For who is able to straighten what He has bent?**
- 14 In the day of prosperity be happy, But in the day of adversity consider —God has made the one as well as the other So that man will not discover anything that will be after him.

- Who is able to change God's plan for your life? You can't change it. No one can.
- You can try to make your life better by correcting wrongs and relieving suffering, but you can't change the plan that He has for your life.
- We all want life to be easy, but when God has made it difficult, who is able to make it easy?
- He wants you to think about it -
 "Straight roads do not make skillful drivers."
 "God writes straight with crooked lines."
 "Sometimes you need a really crooked road to get your head straight."

13 Consider the work of God, For who is able to straighten what He has bent?

- All that has been said so far about adversity and prosperity has been said without an explanation. Now God comes into the picture.
- Crookedness comes from all those things we call adversities -- painful experiences, injustices, mistreatment, poverty, sickness, accidents, calamity, sorrows.
- God does not waste sorrow or adversity. He knows the purpose for which we go through tragedy and sorrow.
- Don't waste your pandemic.
- God has appointed both the good (the straight) and the bad (the bent or crooked) circumstances.
- Think about your prosperity and think about your adversity. They both are the work of God in your life. In adversity He has not abandoned you.

• **God controls all events in our lives and designs them for our good – Rom 8:28**

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.

- **therefore we should accept everything with thanksgiving,**

1 Thess 5:18

18 In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

- **being content in every circumstance,**

Phil 4:11

- for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am.

- **and counting it all joy to pass through times of trouble.**

James 1:2

2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials,

1 Peter 1:6

6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,



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- God balances our lives by giving us enough blessings to keep us happy and enough burdens to keep us humble.
- Since man cannot see the future, he not able to judge what might be good for him and what is not.
- Consider the Chinese woodcutter.
- So respond accordingly - be happy when it's a day of prosperity and thoughtful when it's a day of adversity.
- If we are able to accept this and live this way, when we come to the day of our death we will be pleasing to God and leave behind a good reputation that will have continuing influence.

14 In the day of prosperity be happy, But in the day of adversity consider —God has made the one as well as the other So that man will not discover anything that will be after him.

- The great Satanic lie that subtly comes at us a thousand times a day is that we are gods, we are in charge, we can plan, we can direct, we can control.
- But we are not in control. God is.
- God has made the day of prosperity and the day of adversity.
- God has designed life to be full of the unexpected so that we might realize that we do not control our future.
- He knows exactly how much & how long is best. His hand is on the thermostat...His eye is on the thermometer.
- For the second time in two verses, he exhorts the reader to "consider" the work of God in bringing about both kinds of days in a person's life.
- When times are good, be happy. But when times are bad, be patient.

**Day by day and with each passing moment,
Strength I find to meet my trials here;
Trusting in my Father's wise bestowment,
I've no cause for worry or for fear.**