

Ecclesiastes 7:1-29

“A good name *is* better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one’s birth. 2 *It is* better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that *is* the end of all men; and the living will lay *it* to heart. 3 Sorrow *is* better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. 4 The heart of the wise *is* in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools *is* in the house of mirth. 5 *It is* better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools. 6 For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so *is* the laughter of the fool: this also *is* vanity. 7 Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart. 8 Better *is* the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: *and* the patient in spirit *is* better than the proud in spirit. 9 Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools. 10 Say not thou, What *is the cause* that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this. 11 Wisdom *is* good with an inheritance: and *by it there is* profit to them that see the sun. 12 For wisdom *is* a defense, *and* money *is* a defense: but the excellency of knowledge *is, that* wisdom giveth life to them that have it. 13 Consider the work of God: for who can make *that* straight, which he hath made crooked? 14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him. 15 All *things* have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just *man* that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked *man* that prolongeth *his life* in his wickedness. 16 Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? 17 Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time? 18 *It is* good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all. 19 Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than

ten mighty *men* which are in the city. 20 For *there is not* a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not. 21 Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee: 22 for oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others. 23 All this have I proved by wisdom: I said, I will be wise; but it *was* far from me. 24 That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out? 25 I applied mine heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason *of things*, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness *and* madness: 26 and I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart *is* snares and nets, *and* her hands *as* bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her. 27 Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, *counting* one by one, to find out the account: 28 which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found. 29 Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright: but they have sought out many inventions.”

Introduction

“Solomon has, it seems in some ways, hit a low in the end of chapter 6, and he at least starts to look at even in discouraging things some positive aspects as he moves in to chapter 7. Now remember, this is the wisest man whose ever lived. And yet God will say to him ***‘Your heart is not perfect towards me like the heart of your father David.’*** So he’s the wisest man that ever lived, but in regards to devotion, emotionally, he is not as attached to the LORD as his father David was. He has indulged himself in everything that people in this world think *‘If I have this, get my hands on this, or if I get rid of this one and get another one [wife, obviously], I’m going to be happy.’* Here’s a guy with a thousand wives, he’s a guy with more wealth than any of us can even imagine. He has everything, and he’s speaking no doubt at the end of his life out of his frustration, and probably writing, you know, the proverbs that he wrote,

songs that he wrote, what we have surviving of all of that, this is probably I would imagine part of his greatest joy, to be able to put things to the page, and say ***'I've squandered, I'm wealthy beyond imagination, I have more wives than certainly anybody could possibly ever desire, and yet I'm lonely, I'm bankrupt, LORD I'm thankful that all of this has worn on me to the point that I can speak the truth.'*** So I'm sure that he's thankful, at least, to be able to say some of the things that the Holy Spirit is moving him to say here in this Book.

What A Good Name Is Worth

In chapter 7 he says ***"A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth."*** (verse 1) A good name, by the way, is better than a good great name, like Ahab or Karl Marx, Adolf Hitler, a good name can be better than a great name. But he says here, ***"A good name is better than precious ointment;"*** there's a fragrance when someone hears your name. It just should be that way. You know, when I have my grandkids here *'Grandpa!'* I want there to be a certain fragrance with that, you know, I constantly appeal to the carnal nature, I give them candy, I do everything to create that *'Grandpa, that smells great.'* You know, sometimes you hear somebody's name, it stinks, doesn't it? And sometimes in our lives, we forget the things we want to remember and remember the things we wish we could forget. Sometimes there's just those people, when we hear their names, it just stinks. It says here that a good name is better than it says, a precious ointment, it has it's own fragrance to it. Solomon, I wonder what he's thinking as he writes this, in chapter 22 of the Book of Proverbs he had said ***"A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches; and loving favour rather than silver and gold."*** and I think at this point, he's thinking *'My name meant something at one point in time,'* and he must be thinking about how he squandered so much, a good name, better than precious ointment. We think of Jesus, when he goes to, after Lazarus is raised from the dead, to the house of Simon, he used to be a leper, and the folks are gathered

there, and Mary of course, the sister of Martha, breaks open this cruse of spikenard and pours it out on his, and it says the fragrance of it fills the whole house, the fragrance of her devotion. And of course, the disciples, led by Judas, said **'Why was this waste made? This is worth a year's wage, was worth 50 grand, why was it dumped, it could have been sold and given to the poor,'** very pompous, and seems very self-righteous, and Jesus said **'Let her alone, what she's done, is she's anointed me for my burial.'** And I am sure, several days after that on the cross, you could still smell that spikenard. And he said **'Wherever this gospel goes, wherever it's preached throughout the world, what this woman has done, her name is going to be remembered.'** And you look and you think, Alexander the Great, you think of all of these people, things that they've done, you know, in God's house, amongst God's family, Mary has way more clout than Alexander the Great, or Napoleon. So a good name, better than precious ointment. **"and the day of death than the day of one's birth."** he's not morose there, he's talking about someone who has acquired a good name, they've lived their life the right way, and in their final hour, they're ready for a passage, they're ready to make that passage into the presence of the LORD. So, in that sense, for the person who has acquired a good name, they've walked uprightly, the day of death, he says, is better than the day of birth. Because he's going to say, you're whole life you don't know what you're headed into. By the end of life, if you've gone through all those things, and you've done what's right, good. And look, that is something the haunts human beings. Dr. Ernest Becker, won the Pulitzer Prize for a book that he wrote, it's called *The Denial of Death*, and he says *"It's only the human animal that is haunted by the thought of death, only the human animal is haunted their entire life by the thought of death, and that it inspires all kinds of activities."* We know that, you know. One of the philosophers from the last century said that we love to sing Old Langsyne as loud as we can on New Year's Eve because it drowns out the macabre sound of grass growing up on our graves. These people need something, to think about this kind of stuff, you know, death. The idea is, animals aren't haunted, your dog's not haunted, *'Boy, what's the purpose of my life, what's going to happen when I take my last breath?'* only the

human animal. [Comment: I did notice with one of my cats, Nibbles, when she was about two years before her death, she got really friendly, when she hadn't been before, she started sleeping on my bed at night. We all felt sure she sensed her mortality, and that her life was drawing to a close. I found this amazing.] And Becker said, it inspires all kinds of activity, we eat healthy, we try to stay young, we get rid of our wrinkles...try to make ourselves look younger instead of just eating it and enjoying it. It inspires all kinds of activities that deny the fact that it hangs there, that this is a pilgrimage, it's a journey, we are not home, we're Ambassadors, we're away from home. When Cain killed his brother Abel, and God drove him out from his presence, he said **'Now I'm going to be a fugitive and a vagabond all the days of my life.'** A fugitive is someone whose running from home, and a vagabond is someone without a home. We're not fugitives and vagabonds, it says that we are Foreigners and Pilgrims. A foreigner is away from home, a pilgrim is headed home. That's what we are. Like it or not, I was listening to fox news today and they were arguing about something, and one of the commentators was saying *'How'*, they were arguing about the abuse of prescription drugs in America, and how many people are abusing that, and the other guy says *'but on the other side, of course, we thank God for medicine, those line of drugs have helped people,'* and he said *'Life expectancy has increased,'* it should have been clear, the length of life expectancy has increased, but life expectance is fatal in every generation, it's total in every generation, every hundred people born, 100 people die, life expectancy has not increased. I don't expect anybody to beat it, only Jesus beat it! Life expectancy is not a very super-subject, because for every 100 people born 100 people die. But Solomon's saying, **'a good name, you live your life the right way, you take that to those last hours, and instead of laying there in terror and fear, there's a measure of anticipation.'** I'm sure there's a measure of anxiety, I've never done that before. I'd rather be Raptured, never done that before either, but I just think I'd rather be Raptured than that, but I am convinced, because I've been with enough people making that passage, that the Lord is on the other side. He doesn't let us fall into the darkness, he reaches across before we release, before our spirit is released

from the body, he reaches across, and he meets us, he's the Good Shepherd and he takes us. And what an expectancy we have, in a world that's so troubled and so hopeless. And then when you go that way, you also leave that good name behind, you've left a legacy for your kids, you know.

Better To Go To The House Of Mourning. Why?

“It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to heart.” (verse 2) So, he says in one sense, it's better to keep life in perspective, Solomon has thousands of people that come to his table every day, back there in 1st Kings chapter 4, he gave the amount of bread, he's feeding thousands of people everyday, and he must look at this crowd and think, government based, how many freeloaders are there, over 3,000 gallons of wine every day, he must be looking at that, and say **‘You know what the truth is? It's better to go to the house of mourning, and you take a sober estimate of life.’** Moses said in *Psalm 90*, **‘Teach us to number our days, the life may be extended to three-score and ten, maybe a man will live to be 70 years, and if God is gracious maybe he'll live to be 80, but still, nobody beats that.’** So he says **‘Teach us to number our days, that we might live our lives with wisdom.’** And here's Solomon hitting on that, he said **‘You know it's better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting, the reason being, for that is the end of all men, to realize how mortal we are, how temporary life is, and the living’** he says, now he speaks throughout of the wise, the idea is **‘will lay it to heart.’**

Wisdom Comes From Facing The Difficulties Of Life

“Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.” (verse 3) Notice in verse 1 it says a good name is better, it says here it's better to go to the house of mourning, now he says

sorrow is better, he's going to say that 8 times in the first ten verses, "better," he's making comparisons. **"Sorrow is better than laughter:"** the word "sorrow" can mean anxiety, the idea is *'agida sometimes is better than laughter,'* **"for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better." (verse 3b)** there's wisdom and depth that comes with facing the real difficulties in life. **"The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth." (verse 4)** the heart of the wise, you know, Sunday night, just when we're here, with the pictures of what's happening in northern Iraq, people being slaughtered, beheaded, tortured, we can't relegate to faces on our television, we never let that be nameless pictures that go across the screen, those are grandma's, grandpa's and dads and kids and grandkids and nieces and nephews and cousins and best friends. [Comment: Samaritan's Purse was running the equivalent of an army field M.A.S.H. unit, field hospital, right outside Mosul where the battle between ISIS and the Iraqi army was taking place, with all the innocent civilians flooding out, wounded, men, women and children of all ages. Now they're camped out at the Venezuelan border assisting all the refugees fleeing that failed nation. See https://unityinchrist.com/evangelism/samaritan_purse.htm to learn how you can help in **"the house of mourning"**.] He says the wise person, you know, takes those things to heart, in the house of mourning. But the heart of the fool is in the house of mirth. **"It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools." (verse 5)** Better to be corrected by a wise man, even though we don't like to be rebuked, than it is to hear the song of fools, **"For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity." (verse 6)** I love that. They of course would get wood to cook, sometimes depending on where they were, in the desert there's nothing available, they would grab thorns and thistles. When you try to use that as fuel under a pot, it would crackle, you'd hear it crackling, but it doesn't produce any heat, it burns out quickly, it doesn't produce anything. And he's making the same analogy, *'better to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools,'* **"For"** the reason why, **"as the crackling of thorns under a pot,**

so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity.” (verse 6) it’s vanity, emptiness, it doesn’t produce anything.

Oppression Drives The Wise Crazy

“Surely oppression maketh the wise man mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart.” (verse 7) He’s going to make some observations here, “oppression” the Hebrew kind of translates it “extortion,” the idea is, look, if you have godly wisdom at all, as you watch the news, and you see extortion and oppression, you see the less fortunate taken advantage of, you see the terrible things that go on around us, it says it makes the wise man mad, the idea is [for the word “mad”] insane is the Hebrew word, it drives a righteous man, a wise man crazy to look at the injustice, constantly it goes on. You think *‘How do they get away with this!? How can they do this!? How can they say that!?’* Because you’ve come from darkness into the light, and we serve another King, we respond to another Kingdom, so we see things so differently than the world does, and it says **‘Surlly oppression or extortion makes a wise man insane, it drives him crazy,’** **“and a gift” a bribe “destroyeth the heart.”** People getting a payoff, that happened back then, doesn’t happen now. Right?

God Saves The Best For Last

“Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.” (verse 8) now, better is the end of a thing than the beginning, now that’s certainly true for you and I in Jesus Christ, isn’t it. You know, he goes to Cana of Galilee, it tells us it was there at a wedding when he first manifested forth his glory, his first miracle. It was there were he turned water into wine. And when the Goodman of the house tasted it, he said **‘You know, this is so different, normally they put out the stuff that’s sweet first, and then when everybody’s well drunk, they put the poison out.’** That

describes how Satan works, he puts out what's sweet first, and then when we're all satiated with it, when we lose our senses, then he puts out the poison. God works completely the opposite, he has saved the best for last [cf. Revelation 21]. Imagine what it's going to be like. I love when we have worship here, the musicians are leading, when we have communion service, but I think *'We ain't seen nothing yet. When we step into glory, when we're a part of myriads and myriads of myriads of saints and angels around the Throne of the King of kings and Lord of lords, we only think what we know worship is. Wait till we get there.'* And everybody in this congregation will sing in tune. We try to all help each other now, everybody will have perfect pitch there. Imagine what that will be like. He's saved the best for last, again, that's the way he works. And Solomon takes note of that, he doesn't of course have the light that you and I have to walk in. But he says **"Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit."** (verse 8) "the patient spirit" someone whose patient is better than the proud spirit, the arrogant person, better to be patient. But our patience can be tested with arrogant people, can't it? ...you go through all of this stuff, you get saved, now you need to be a nice guy. *'I wasn't born a Christian, I wasn't born a pastor, I'm lucky that I've got the Holy Ghost, because I'd like to knock you down right now!'* But it says, look, ***'it's better to be patient,'*** and he was the king, he could have done whatever he wanted. Better, he says, to have a patient spirit than an arrogant spirit, he adds to it, now look, **"Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools."** (9) It's hard, it takes patience, **"for anger resteth in the bosom of fools"** it doesn't take any practice to get angry. Right? It takes practice to control yourself, to yield to the Spirit, to do what's right.

'Say Not, Oh The Good Old Days, They Were Better'

He says **"Say not thou, What is *the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.*"** (verse 10) *'I remember the good*

old days, they were better than these,’ Solomon says **“for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.”** People say *‘Oh the good old days, remember the good old days?’* Look, the children of Israel did that, they came out of Egypt, Moses is leading them through the Wilderness, and what are they doing? *‘Oh Egypt, we miss when we were in Egypt! Why? Because there was garlic.’* What about the taskmaster’s whip, the fact that they were taking your male children and throwing them in the Nile River, what about the fact your backs were bleeding, they were whipping you? You know, we have selective memory. And when we run into hard things we say stupid things like that. He says that kind of fear doesn’t come with wisdom, *‘It, the good old days, it was easier before,’* it wasn’t easier before, we were getting stoned, we were getting drunk, we were trying to fill our lives with immorality and all kinds of nonsense, we were lost, we were empty, we were stuffing ourselves with everything Satan was handing us in the world, it wasn’t easier! The children of Israel were saying *‘Oh, the flesh pots! There was fish, there was garlic, there were leeks, there were onions, everything that gives you bad breath was back in Egypt!’* Now, that’s what we say, that’s crazy, we’re saved now, we’re going into the Kingdom of heaven, it isn’t always easy. But it sure is better than where we were headed. ***‘Say not thou, what’s the cause of all this, the former days were better, the good old days than these, for you’re not inquiring wisely concerning this.’*** The LORD is the one who says I AM that I AM, I’m the one who was, I’m the one who is, I’m the one who is to come, he’s the ever-present one...seize the day. Because you’ll never get to live it again. This night, right now, he says in Malachi that when we gather together, the LORD stoops down, he listens to those who gather to think about his name, this night, according to God’s Word. And you only get to do this one time. Whatever season you’re in, in your life right now, suffering 101, aggravation 101, you want to pass the course, you don’t want to go back and retake that. You only get to do it one time. And Solomon says in that place there are things to learn that the fool never learns. It doesn’t say that it’s easy, it doesn’t say it’s always pleasant. But the difference between you and an unbeliever is an unbeliever is going through all that without Christ, you’re going through it with

Jesus, with your Shepherd, with your Saviour. You're going through it knowing it's not permanent, it's going to end someday. You're going through it vastly different. And every season in life is unique. Every season in life is unique, it has it's own joys, it's own sorrows, it's own heartache, it's own blessings. He says, **'Don't sit around thinking about the good old days, that's not wisdom,'** he says.

Wisdom Is As Good As An Inheritance

He says **"Wisdom is good with an inheritance: and by it there is profit to them that see the sun."** (verse 11) now that's true spiritually, and he's going to make a point here, your translation might say **"Wisdom is as good as an inheritance,"** or **"Wisdom is good in place of an inheritance,"** it's funny how they struggle with the translation here. **"Wisdom is good with an inheritance: and by it there is profit to them that see the sun."** there's a good part of it, it says, referring back to verse 11, **"For wisdom is a defense, and money is a defense: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it."** (verse 12) and money, inheritance, that's also a good thing, that's also a defense, but **"the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it."** (verse 12b) The truth is, it isn't the inheritance, it isn't money that makes you secure, it's the excellency of wisdom, he says, that gives life. [example: many Jews during the mid to late 1930s in Germany and Europe had a lot of money, they were rich, but few had the wisdom and foresight to see what was coming. Those who did, left Europe early and saved their lives, their wisdom gave life.] Living it is much more visceral and organic than it simply is material. Jesus would say **'A man's worth doesn't consist in the abundance of things that he owns.'**

*Not Knowing What's Next Keeps Us Dependent On
God*

“Consider the work of God: for who can make *that straight, which he hath made crooked?*” (verse 13) God is sovereign, God does things that man is not supposed to undo, we don’t understand them all the time. He says **“In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity”** because he makes the straight and he makes the crooked, **“but in the day of adversity, consider:”** he says, **“God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him.”** (verse 14) this is why he does it, **“that man should find nothing after him.”** that man never knows what’s next, is the idea. Let me back up and, what he’s saying is this, ***‘God makes the crooked, he makes the straight, he’s sovereign, so then in the day of prosperity, when things are straight, when they’re good, be joyful,’*** I mean, when things are going great in your life, who are you thanking, who are you praising? So often I think God only hears us in times of desperation. When everything’s kind of going good, we say *‘Hey, I’ll talk to you at lunch, I got my coffee, I’m on my way to work. Oh, I’m sorry, I’ll talk to you after work,’* then I got home, *‘the cat puked, my wife, the kids are all crazy, I’ll talk to you before I go to bed, and then at bedtime it says Lord, your Word says you give your beloved sleep, I’ll see you in the morning.’* [laughter] And he’s God, he’s waiting to talk to us, and we’re kind of running him around. But when something bad comes down, then we’re like *‘Oh God, oh God, oh God, oh God!’* and he says *‘Oh, nice to hear from ya, I’ve been looking to spend some time with you.’* He says ***‘Hey look, in the day of prosperity, be joyful, the idea is, to be thankful. But in the day of adversity there’s things to consider, God has also set the one against the other.’*** that’s the truth. In this pilgrimage which is temporary, there are joys and sorrows, there’s no way around that, we’re not exempt from those things. But this is **“to the end”** this is what God wants, **“that man should find nothing after him.”** that he would realize ***‘nobody can understand what’s coming next, that man should find nothing after him, he doesn’t know what happens next, and because of that it keeps us dependent on the LORD, it keeps us in his presence, it keeps us thankful in the good days.’***

*Sometimes The Good Die Young and The Wicked Live
To A Ripe Old Age*

“All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness.” (verse 15) [the Godfather anyone?] That cancels out Job’s counsellors, doesn’t it? Job’s counsellors said *‘Well you got bad stuff happening to you, certainly you must be in sin.’* Solomon says that’s not true, **‘I’ve seen good people suffer like they’re wicked, I’ve seen wicked people, they prosper like they’re good,’** this is a difficult thing, Asaph talks about it in Psalm 73. Look, for you and I, I think it’s very important, because Christians too often tend to be judgmental. If we see somebody going through a hard time, going through a sickness, it’s too easy for us to think *‘Man, God must really be dealing with them.’* Be careful, because you can say that ahead of time, if you tell someone *‘Hey man, you need to knock this off, you’re stealing or you’re living in sexual sin, or if you keep drinking you’re going to ruin your family,’* if you can kind of tell them ahead of time, then you see them head into a mess and get obliterated, then you can think *‘Wow, God, he’s dealing with them.’* [i.e. that’s a proper judgment.] But if you walk up on someone and you don’t know how they started it, and you just see them in a difficult situation, you have no right to pass judgment and say, because that’s what’s Job’s friends did to him, when something completely different was going on. Jesus said to the disciples **‘Get into the boat and go to the other side.’** He didn’t say *‘Get into the boat, go under to the other side, he said ‘go over to the other side.’* They ended up in a storm because they were obedient to him. There are storms of instruction, and there are storms of correction, Jonah was in a storm of correction, the disciples were in a storm of instruction, it was ordered by the Lord. He said **‘Get into the boat, go over to the other side.’** Because they obeyed him, they did exactly what he told them to do, they ended up in a storm. Now somebody comes along and looks at the storm and say *‘Man, God must really be dealing with them,*

look at the mess they're in.' You can't do that. Again, from the front end, you can warn people, we're to exhort one another, we're supposed to do that. But if you wander up on someone, and come into somebody's life and they're in a mess, you can't make the assessment then. They may be exactly where the LORD wants them. He may be doing something in their life, it says Jesus rebuked the wind and the sea, and they were terrified. They were way more afraid of the calm than they were of the storm. And they said **'Who is this?'** because they knew he healed the lepers and he healed the people that were paralyzed, they knew that he cast out demons. He's the Lord of storms. So Solomon says here, **'I've seen this vanity [emptiness], there is a just man that perishes in his righteousness, there's a wicked man that prolongs his life in his wickedness,'** sometimes I just think because the wicked man needs more time to straighten out.

'Don't Be Arrogant, Self-Righteous. Why Should You Destroy Yourself?'

Verses 16 and 17 now **"Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?" (verses 16-17)** What he's saying is don't be self-righteous and don't be, you know, look out for pride and self-righteousness. Be not righteous overmuch, don't make yourself out to be overwise, don't be a smartypants, look out for pride and self-righteousness, **"why should you destroy thyself?"** Again, Solomon had written earlier **"Pride goeth before destruction,"** we always think pride goeth before a fall, it doesn't say that. It says **'pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall, before a stumbling.'** Here Solomon says **'Look, I've seen good people suffer, I've seen wicked people, but I will tell you this, don't be self-righteous, don't be arrogant and proud, why should you destroy yourself? There's other causes that do things that I don't understand, but why destroy yourself?'** **"Be not over much wicked"** King

James doesn't do a good job there, the idea is **'do not abound in wickedness.'** All of us struggle, look down in **verse 20**, it says **"For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not."** Is there anybody here that does not sin? Raise your hand and sin. You liar. Ok, you know he says here, look, **'Don't be overmuch wicked, the idea is, you shouldn't abound in wickedness, neither be foolish, why should you die before the time?'** Isn't it interesting, why should you die before the time? The Scripture tells us in Psalm 139, that all of our days are written out before we live any of them. Isn't it interesting? Man, it seems, either finishes his course where he gets in the way, there's only two reasons that the end comes. Ananias and Saphira, it doesn't tell us they were lost and went to hell, but they lied [to the Holy Spirit], the early Church being established, they both fell down dead. **1st Corinthians chapter 11**, Paul says there to the Corinthians church, he's talking to believers, **'Let a man examine himself, then let him partake [in the Passover service, which the early Church for 300 years partook of, a New Testament Passover service]. If you partake unworthily'** he said **'for that reason, people are living in open sin, they think it's a game, then they come to the Lord's table, this is how they treat the Lord, for that reason some of those among you are sickly and sleep, they passed on [i.e. they're dead].'** God will deal. There isn't anywhere in the Bible that gives us a sense, of God making a list, checking it twice, gonna find out whose naughty and nice, that's not God, he doesn't get out his gun and say *'Now dance, blam! blam! blam!'* It says he's longsuffering, he's incredible in his mercy, in his grace. He's not of a nature to do those things. But there are people that, evidently, he says **'Don't abound in wickedness, don't be foolish, why should you die before your time.'** **"It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all."** (verse 18) Solomon says get ahold of what I'm saying here. Here's what you need to understand **"withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all."** Isn't that wonderful? **'These are difficult things I'm saying here, don't be self-righteous, don't be proud, don't be abounding in wickedness, don't be a fool,**

‘rushing yourself to your own death,’ he says **‘it’s good that we should take hold of these things, and don’t withdraw yourself from this,’** **“he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.”** Isn’t that a wonderful thing? It’s not groveling before God, but it is fear, it is awe, it’s reverence. And ultimately I think as we love him, and by the end of the day for me sometimes, *‘Lord, I blew it again, I’m so sorry, you held nothing back when you gave yourself for me, and I so often deserve some stupid... there’s some territory in my heart where you’re not on the throne, where I want to keep just some little corner so I can sit on my own throne, Lord, please forgive me.’* And wonderfully, love becomes the greatest motive for living in the fear of the Lord, **“he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.”**

Nobody Does This Perfectly

“Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city.” (verse 19) better to have wisdom than troops, **“For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.” (verse 20)** Isn’t it wonderful to hear him say that? **1st John** tells us if we say we have not sinned, John’s 90-years-old at that point in time, 90-year-old apostle, he uses the personal pronoun “we” and he includes himself **“If we say”** including himself, **“we have not sinned, the truth is not in us.”** **“If we”** including himself, **“confess our sins, he’s faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** He **says if we walk in the light**, that’s not how we walk, it’s where we walk, **“the blood of Jesus Christ”** the tenses are **“continually cleanseth us from all sin,”** that’s our daily experience. In Jesus Christ, right? is our hope, isn’t he? You’re struggling in the day, you argue with your wife, you’re supposed to be a Christian husband, where’s your hope? That your wife’s going to straighten out? no, no. Our hope is Jesus Christ. What is your hope if you sin today in your heart, and thought *‘I’d just like to...’* He’s our hope, Jesus Christ is our hope. In our failing, in our struggle, he’s our hope. Because **‘there is not a man, just man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not.’**

You have in Revelation chapter 5, John begins to weep because there's no man found worthy in heaven (that means the rapture has happened) there's no man found worthy in heaven, on the earth or under the earth, not a single man anywhere in any dimension found worthy to open the seals. That relieves a lot of pressure from us. Because we think for sure we need to be the ones worthy. No man was found worthy, in heaven, on the earth, under the earth, **“For there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.” (verse 20)** nobody does this perfectly.

Don't Take To Heart Everything People Say About You

Also, **“Take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee.” (verse 21)** What he's going to say is **‘You can't take it to heart everything people say, for often times, also’** listen to what he says, **“For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.” (verse 22)** He says you got some nerve getting bugged when you hear somebody say something about you, now if they do it every day, every month, for a year, you can be bugged, come and ask us, we'll tell you when you can be bugged. But the idea is, you hear somebody say something behind your back, don't freak out, how many times have you yourself said something about somebody? you've cursed somebody in your heart. We get aggravated, we do the same thing. You know, I work with a bunch of people that are remarkable, and you work with somebody for 30 years, like a family, brothers and sisters, there probably isn't one of them that hasn't hurt me in some way, but there isn't a single one of them that wouldn't take a bullet for me. That's family. So you can't take it to heart every time somebody says something, and make it bigger than it should be. Now look, granted, some of us are a little more beat up in that respect than others. Some of us came with a few more scars than others, some of us have some wounds that are still blue, that still need to be lanced and drained, I understand that. But we're learning to love one another, we're learning to trust one another, love covers a

multitude of sins, we're learning to look past things. But we're learning something from another Kingdom that doesn't work in this world, without God's grace, his Word and his Holy Spirit. He says ***'There's nobody on earth that does good that hasn't sinned, so don't take it to heed, don't take it to heart if you hear your servant curse you.'*** I'm sure Solomon heard that, he had enough servants. ***'For oftentimes also in your own heart you know you have cursed others.'***

Watch Out For The Woman Who Seduces Your Heart To Idolatry

"All this have I proved by wisdom: I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me." (verse 23) you know, I huff and puff and blow the house down, didn't work. ***"That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?"*** (verse 24) he's searching and trying to figure out the wisdom of God in his own energy, God says his ways are above our ways, they're past finding out, even if you're the wisest man in the world. ***"I applied my heart to know, and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness:"*** I wanted to get a grip, I wanted to see the whole thing, then he says some tough things here, I didn't write this, so don't anybody be offended at me, ***"and I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands [are chains]: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her."*** (verses 25-26) Now he seems to be saying here, ***'I find more bitter than death,'*** the Amplified Bible does a good job there, ***'the woman'*** the idea is ***'who seduces your heart to idolatry, away from the Living God, and in her heart there are snares and traps, and she reaches out her hands to touch you, to caress you, and yet they are chains.'*** And Solomon says, ***'You know, but whoso pleases God shall escape from her.'*** Guys, hear me? ***'Whoso pleases God shall escape from her, but a sinner shall be taken by her.'*** Who pleases God? Look back on **verse 18**, ***"he that feareth God shall come forth***

from them all.” He says, **‘There’s one thing I’ve seen amongst men, that women can get in there, they can seduce a man, they can capture his heart, it’s like they have snares and traps, their hands become like chains,’** and he says **‘that’s more bitter than death, whoso pleases the LORD will escape from her, and the sinner shall be taken by her.’**

Solomon Says ‘I’ve Found One Man In A Thousand I Can Trust, But I Haven’t Found A Woman Among A Thousand’

“Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account: which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found.” (verses 27-28) I’ve counted this, one by one, going through this process. I like the NIV if you have the NIV here, it says **“while I was still searching, but not finding”** the idea is, he says, **‘while I’m searching all this out, while I’m doing this, not successfully,’** he says, **‘I have found one man among a thousand, the right kind of man, BUT a woman among all those, have I not found.’** I’m not saying he’s right here, I’m just telling you what Solomon was saying. But he’s saying **‘I have found one man among a thousand that you can trust. But I ain’t found a woman,’** and he had a thousand, that was probably his problem, if he just had one he probably would have been able to find one. But when he had a thousand, he says, and they seduced his heart, from 1st Kings chapter 11, his heart went after foreign gods because of the wives that he had. So is he writing this in retrospect? Is he looking back here? He says **‘I searched this out, it was frustration, you know you can find one man in a thousand that’s good, but I haven’t found one woman among all those,’** probably speaking of his own life. In fact, your Amplified Bible says **“I haven’t found one woman amongst the 1,000 in my harem.”** they include that there.

*When God Made Man He Didn't Create A Mental File
For Death Within Man's Mind*

Verse 29, "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions." Please note, man did not evolve and become upright from monkeys, he said **"God hath made man upright,"** Jesus affirms that, he says **'In the beginning God created them male and female,'** Jesus affirms that. He says here, God, he created man upright. You look at the world, you turn on the news, God didn't make us like that, it didn't start that way. He made man upright, he created man in his own image, his own likeness. Adam, think of Adam, the first day he existed he was 30 years old, he was an adult male. He was preprogrammed, he didn't go through the terrible twos, the horrible threes, he didn't have to learn, his first day of existence God turned the lights on, he was created in God's image and likeness. He knew fully even as he was fully known. The first day of his existence is the 7th day, God goes through creation for six days, on the 7th day, man's first full day of existence, God rests, not because he's tired, but he fellowships with man [that was the creation of the Sabbath day]. Man was sinless at that point in time, man clothed in light. We know that because when he sins he knows that he's naked and he has to cover himself. It tells us in Revelation chapter 19, when we see the saints in glory, it says they're clothed with fine linen, bright and white, the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. That's the righteousness we were created in, in the beginning, clothed with this fine linen, pure and white, man was a being of light. And as he sinned the light goes out, he knows he's naked, he's ashamed [that is a doctrinal teaching peculiar to the Calvary Chapels, we just don't know, and the Bible doesn't tell us one way or the other]. So, it says here God created man, he made man upright, that's Genesis chapters 1 and 2. That's the good news. The rest of the Bible is about God fixing the mess. First two chapters everything's fine. From chapter 3 onward, it's a fixer-upper. He knew what was coming, the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world, so it's not a problem. He says **"Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man**

upright;” look, that’s why when someone dies, we watch people in church, my own mother, how do you grieve? There are some women who will wear their husband’s flannel shirt, they won’t cook anymore, because they were used to cooking for him, *‘should I cook, should I clean the closet, should I get rid of his clothes? What should I do, should I still wear a wedding ring?’* There’s no file for death, God didn’t make man to die, so when he programmed Adam before the fall, Adam didn’t have a category for death. So when someone dies that we love, we have no file for it, there’s nowhere to put it. So you watch people wrestle, some of them, the graveyard vigils, they lay at the tombstone for years, they cry, they’re moved to do that, they try to work out, *‘How do I do this, how do I handle this?’* When God finally has everything back in his hands, the first thing he says is **‘There’s no more death,’** in heaven when he has everything back under control, no death, no sorrow, no sighing, no pain, no suffering. So it’s all gone. [Comment: Revelation 21 shows heaven, the New Jerusalem, and all of us as resurrected, immortal beings, will be on earth, the new earth, where the New Jerusalem will descend and reside forever, our new home. So the concept of heaven is where God is and where we’ll reside, not somewhere up in the clouds or way off beyond the universe somewhere.] So when he created man he didn’t give him the capacity for death. So when we face it, it’s a foreigner, it’s a foreigner, it doesn’t fit in, it’s not right. How do you deal with it, where do you put it? We don’t have the capacity for it, because when he created man, he made him upright.

Two Basic Forms Of Religion Flow From Cain & Abel

“but they have sought out many inventions.” (verse 29b) “but” here’s the trouble, right there. “many inventions” the idea is “schemes, evil devices” man has gone that way. First thing after the fall Cain kills Abel, two brothers. Listen, they’re more alike than any identical twins that had ever been born, because Eve was made from Adam’s side, it wasn’t like Cain favored his mother’s side of the family, and Abel favored dad’s side of the family. *‘Boy Cain, you look like*

your grandmother,' he didn't have a grandmother. God took something from Adam's side and made Eve, she had the exact same genes and chromosomes, so Cain and Abel were more alike than any twin boys that ever had been born. It wasn't like one hung with a bad crowd, there were no crowds. It wasn't like one liked football and the other liked to be on the web and facebook all day, there was none of that. It wasn't like one liked Heavy Metal and one liked Rap, there was none of that stuff, there was none of that! Two of them exactly alike, because from those two flow all the rivers of religion and sin throughout human history. One of them comes with a lamb, right? No doubt, that was because, the earth is pretty pristine then, Adam in his fallen state lives to be 900, things were pretty pure still, in a sense. And one of his sons must have come and said *'Dad! Dad! Look at that rainbow!'* they found figs, no doubt, 50lb figs. We have fossils of asparagus ferns 50-foot high, one grape was this big, when a little kid wanted a grape, it was no problem to peel it in those days. They must have said *'Look at this butterfly!'* and Adam probably said *'Ya, ya, that's cool, that's great, ya.'* One of them must have gone to Eve and said *'What is it with him? He's such a bummer.'* She said, *'Boys, you weren't on the other side, you weren't on the other side. You don't know what it was like, to walk with Him, and to talk to Him, and to look into his face. Your dad loves butterflies.'* No doubt the only time they had seen him at peace is once in awhile he'd take a lamb, and he'd go off into the distance somewhere where the cherub was guarding the way to Eden, and he'd hear that lamb go silent. And dad would come back with blood on his hands and on his robe, and you would see peace on his face. And Cain, somehow, didn't want anything to do with that. Abel, with the baton passed to him, there were only two religions in the world, there's a religion of substitutionary atonement, the blood of the Lamb. And every other form of religion is man's works, the fruit of the ground, his sweat, what he can do, how he can earn God's love, those are the only two streams that flow from Paradise. And Cain still kills Abel every day on the news. You still see the hatred, every day towards somebody, a football player who makes the touchdown and takes the team into the playoffs, and all he does is this, and it's all over the news, and the poor kid is just saying *'I was just*

thanking God, we've just won the game and we're going into the playoffs.' Isn't it insane? It's insane, you look at all the other stuff that's going on, and a kid raises his hand and points to heaven, he's the troublemaker. Doesn't matter if the White House is lit up in a rainbow, all the matters, that's fine, I'm sure the Chinese and the Russians and ISIS will laugh their heads off over that. But you do this, and the whole world's against you. Hasn't changed. Cain still hates Abel. And we still pass the buck, *'Adam what have you done?'* *'You and me, we were in Paradise, everything was fine, you made her, you brought her to me, before that there was no trouble, it's that woman that you gave me. Don't blame me.'* He says to the woman *'What have you done?'* *'Me? It was the serpent.'* And it's been the same ever since. *'It's the administration, it's the school, it's the Democrats, it's the Republicans, it's the Jews, it's the Muslims, it's the Whites, it's the Blacks,'* It's sin, sin entered in. It's sin. It's sin. Solomon says, ***'You know, I do know this, God didn't botch this thing up in the beginning, he created man upright, it's how he made him. But mankind constantly seeks out all of his own devices, his own ways, his own machinations, his own sinful attitude, I do know that.'*** he says. That problem is not with God it's with man. You and I, wonderfully, we have a hope that the world around us doesn't have, and we have a simple message that still changes lives. We should be, I believe in the days that we're living in, I don't believe much time is left between now and the time when the Lord comes, less time than any generation in the Church, I'm sure of that, whether that's one year or a hundred years, it's less time than any generation of the Church has ever known. It should make an urgency in our hearts for the people we love, the people we care about, the people we run into, that we should be more determined than ever to share the simple message, the baton was passed, the blood of the Lamb, Abel you take this. It said Abel prophesied, the testimony of Jesus, Revelation 10:10, is the spirit of prophecy, the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. It said Abel prophesied of better things. That's the baton we have to pass to our generation, the blood of the Lamb. Don't make it any more complicated than that, the blood of the Lamb of the Lord Jesus. That's the Good News. Amen? Amen, let's stand, let's pray...[transcript of a

connective expository sermon on Ecclesiastes 7:1-29, given by Pastor Joe Focht, Calvary Chapel of Philadelphia, 13500 Philmont Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19116]

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