

# Ecclesiastes 7

Wisdom belongs to God

## I. Lessons from a Funeral

1 A **good name** is better than precious ointment...

- **Solomon considers his legacy...**
  1. Humble
  2. Grateful
  3. Wise
  4. Godly
  5. Innovative
  6. Proud
  7. Selfish
  8. Rich
  9. Greedy
  10. Harsh
  11. Disobedient
  12. Ungodly
  13. Bitter
  14. Messed up? Not finishing well?
  
- **A Good name...**Better than the finest perfume/cologne

### What will we leave this world as our legacy?

#### Legacy of Richard Hale

"My dad always taught us to have Faith against all odds and expect a miracle"

"We would go street witnessing, sometimes door to door, and sometimes in some pretty bad areas. We would invite people to church or to the Harvest Crusades. He said even though it took courage to talk to them, it may be the difference between them going to heaven or hell"

"He could be on his last few dollars and need something for himself, but if he saw a present for a new baby, or a card that he thought someone would like- he would get that first. He cared about people"

"My Dad created so many memories with so many people. He did not have a lot of material things in life, but he was rich with love. That love influenced a lot of people's lives. The love rooted from not just family and traditions but from the love that Christ showed us when he died on the cross for our sins"

"We didn't have a lot of money so my dad would make us clothes"

What rank did your dad have in the Navy? **"The highest rank in my book"**

**Proverbs 22:1** A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, Loving favor rather than silver and gold.

A good name is better than precious ointment and...

- Richard's legacy was a good name. Solomon...not so much

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

- Solomon's intense despair

"Nothing in the first half of verse 1 prepares us for the body-blow of the second half... [Kidner]

**Is there anything good about death?** *If it is true that all things work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose to conform us into the image of Christ...Then what good can come from...is there anything to learn from death?*

2 ...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 take it to heart.

### **Better to attend a Funeral than a Birthday party. Why?**

- Death is common to all: Statistics don't lie 1:1 people die
  1. Opportunity to consider the brevity of life
  2. Opportunity to Recalibrate/Change direction of our life

3 Sorrow is better than laughter, For by a sad countenance the heart is made better.

- When someone we love dies:
  1. Internalize our feelings: Pretend we are "just fine"
  2. Go through the healing/grieving process

### **It is okay to grieve**

**John 11:35** Jesus wept.

- **Believers:** Grieve loss but rejoice at heavens gain and that we will reunite one day

**1 Thessalonians 4:13** [Don't] sorrow as others who have no hope. 14 For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

**Death is hard. God hates death. Death is our enemy. Jesus conquered death**

**1 Corinthians 15:55** "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" **57** ...thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Death is the end of dying. On the day of the believer's death dying is for ever done with. The saints who are with God shall never die any more. Life is wrestling, struggling; but death is the end of conflict: it is rest-victory." [Spurgeon]

**2 Corinthians 5:7** ... absent from the body [is] to be present with the Lord.

4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, But the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

**Psalms 90:12** So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

- **Wise:** Consider certainty of death/Seek to be right with the Lord
- **Fool:** Disregards inevitability of death /Seek intoxication
  1. Numb to the certainty of death/judgment [Drugs, Alcohol, etc.]

2. Foolishly trying to postpone the inevitable. Surprised at death...

**Psalm 73:19** [Godless] Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors.

5 It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise Than for a man to hear the song of fools. 6 For like the crackling of thorns under a pot, So is the laughter of the fool. This also is vanity.

- **Fool's advice promises life but leads to death**
  1. Follow your heart, look out for number one, Do what feels right
  2. Take the "Path of least resistance"
- **Rebuke of the wise may seem harsh but leads to life**
  1. Die to self, love anyway, forgive, humble yourself, do the hard thing
  2. We want wise godly advice from godly men/woman
- **2 Important Rules to follow when considering someone's advice:**
  1. Look at the life of the one giving you advice
  2. Look at the life of the one giving you advice

7 Surely oppression destroys a wise man's reason, And a bribe debases the heart.

- **Oppression/Bribes:** Destroy reason and debase the heart
- **Peer pressure in Government**
  1. Start out high moral standards ready to take on world!
  2. Become corrupt

"Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men." [The Right Honorable The Lord Acton]

...destroys a wise man's reason ....debases the heart. Lit "to lose one's self"

- **Peer pressure in Hollywood**
- **Woodlawn:** Pray for...
  1. John Voight: Angelina Jolie's father
  2. Sean Astin: The Lord of the Rings

"It's not hard to make decisions once you know what your values are" [Roy E Disney]

8 The end of a thing is better than its beginning; The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.9 Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, For anger rests in the bosom of fools.

- **End of a thing better than beginning:** Learn how to wait
- **V 8-9 Adding to description a fool:** Impetuous
  1. **Impatient:** ...will not wait on God's timing
  2. **Proud:** ...If you won't fix it I will
  3. **Angry:** ...waiting for the first chance to express it

## **A fool gives place [rest] to these things in his/her heart**

10 Do not say, "Why were the former days better than these?" For you do not inquire wisely concerning this.

- Remember the "**Good old days?**"

"Even Christians sometimes overestimate the early church, the Reformation, or periods of revival. Wise people certainly learn from the past, but they live in the present with all its opportunities." [Wright]

11 Wisdom is good with an inheritance, And profitable to those who see the sun.

- Received an Inheritance? Pray for wisdom
- Why? Sending habits don't change automatically

After spending a good portion of his life in jail after he robbed a gas station, David Lee Edward's luck changed when he won \$27 million in a Powerball jackpot in 2001. His luck went back to the bad not long after, though. He blew his money on drugs, exotic sports cars and even a jet. Just five years later, the money was all gone. His daughter believes all the lavish items he bought were eventually sold off to buy more drugs and pay off his debts. Edwards died broke and alone; he was cremated because his estranged family couldn't afford to bury him.

12 For wisdom is a defense as money is a defense, But the excellence of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it.

1. Wisdom is a defense:           Against foolishness
2. Money is a defense:           Against poverty

### **Wisdom surpasses riches because it gives life**

**Proverbs 8:32** [Wisdom personified and speaking] "Now therefore, listen to me, my children, For blessed are those who keep my ways. 33 Hear instruction and be wise, And do not disdain it. 34 Blessed is the man who listens to me, Watching daily at my gates, Waiting at the posts of my doors. 35 For whoever finds me finds life, And obtains favor from the Lord; 36 But he who sins against me wrongs his own soul; All those who hate me love death."

### **Better wise and poor than rich and foolish!**

13 Consider the work of God; For who can make straight what He has made crooked?

- Who can change what a sovereign God determines?

14 In the day of prosperity be joyful, But in the day of adversity consider: Surely God has appointed the one as well as the other, So that man can find out nothing that will come after him.

- Good day? Enjoy. Don't wait for the other shoe to drop
- Bad day? God is still in control

**Ephesians 6:13** Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the **evil day**, and having done all, to stand.

### God appointed day of adversity?

**Hebrews 12:11** ...no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those **who have** been trained by it.

- **Chastening:** heb. *paideuō* [pī-dyü'-ō] Discipline. To teach or instruct.
  1. God inflicted
  2. Devil inflicted
  3. Self-inflicted...God will use it in your life **if you let Him...**

### All adversity that God allows in our lives must first go through His filter of love

15 I have seen everything in my days of vanity: There is a just man who perishes in his righteousness, And there is a wicked man who prolongs life in his wickedness.

- **Solomon: I've seen it all...**Great guy dies young/Bad guy live long

**2 Peter 3:9b** [God]...is longsuffering toward us, **not willing that any should perish** but that all should come to repentance. [What if Paul died at 40?]

16 Do not be overly righteous, Nor be overly wise: Why should you destroy yourself? 17 Do not be overly wicked, Nor be foolish: Why should you die before your time? 18 It is good that you grasp this, And also not remove your hand from the other; For he who fears God will escape them all.

- Those who fear God will gravitate to extremes: Consistent/Balanced

**2 Kings 22:2** [Josiah] ...did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David; **he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.**

19 Wisdom strengthens the wise More than ten rulers of the city.

- One wise man can accomplish more than a committee of 10 ungodly leaders

"A camel is just a horse designed by a committee"

**James 1:5** If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and **it will be given to him.**

- Wisdom strengthens the wise: Wise men/woman seek more wisdom

**Matthew 13:12** ...whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but

whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him.

20 For there is not a just man on earth who does good And does not sin.

**Romans 3:23** ...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

- We can do nothing without Jesus...

**John 15:5** "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

**Philippians 4:13** I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

21 Also do not take to heart everything people say, Lest you hear your servant cursing you..

**Do not take into your body the praises or curses of men but know who you are in Christ  
Do not be moved by men...be moved by God**

22 For many times, also, your own heart has known that even you have cursed others...

- Our sin looks better on us than on someone else...
  1. People have talked smack about you...
  2. You've talked smack about others
- Not me? Wrong church... This one has imperfect people in it.

**It is easy to blame others for the state our lives are in... but no one is to blame for our poor choices other than us...Just sayin'**

**SUMMARY Lessons from a Funeral:** Sober reminder of brevity of life and Sovereignty of God

## II. Blame: Path of Least Resistance

- As water seeks its own level so we seek the easy way out of taking responsibility

**Genesis 3:11** And [God] said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" 12 Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate." ... **13** And the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." Blame

23 All this I have proved by wisdom. I said, "I will be wise"; But it was far from me. 24 As for that which is far off and exceedingly deep, Who can find it out? 25 I applied my heart to know, To search and seek out wisdom and the reason of things, To know the wickedness of folly, Even of foolishness and madness.

- **Journal Entry:** "I am doing my best at the God-given task of finding out why man does what he does"

**I still don't know ...and I'm irritated!** C.f. 8:16-17

26 And I find more bitter than death The woman whose heart is snares and nets, Whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God shall escape from her, But the sinner shall be trapped by her. 27 Here is what I have found," says the Preacher, "Adding one thing to the other to find out the reason, 28 Which my soul still seeks but I cannot find: One man among a thousand I have found, But a woman among all these I have not found.

- **Through careful scientific observation I have concluded this:**

1. In a thousand men I might find one good one...
2. In a thousand women I cannot find any!

**Misogynist?** Man who dislikes, despises, or is strongly prejudiced against women.

- **Two paths when faced with our own sin:**

1. Path of least resistance: Blame
2. Path to spiritual health/stability: Responsibility

**Deuteronomy 17:17** [The king]... shall he multiply wives for himself, **lest his heart turn away**

**1 Kings 11:1** ...King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites— 2 from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. 3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. 4 For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David.

29 Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright, But they have sought out many schemes."

- **God created mankind upright:** Lit. Righteous, Straight, Just

**Genesis 1:27** ...God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

**Man was created in God's image and then something happened...  
Devil taught us to seek out schemes...**

Schemes gr. **chishshabown** [khish·shä·vön'] a contrivance, i.e. warlike machine or mental engine, invention. [Against God's original plan. def. of sin]

**Question driving Solomon crazy**

## **Why does mankind continue to destroy itself by seeking out foolish schemes?**

**Psalm 4:2** How long, O you sons of men, Will you turn my glory to shame? How long will you love worthlessness And seek falsehood? Selah

**Genesis 5:3** And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begot a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.

- The world "under the sun" can never be what Solomon wanted it to be...A Utopia that denies responsibility and accountability to a Holy God and need for a Savior

**SUMMARY Blame the Path of Least Resistance:** Path to spiritual health: Take responsibility and stop blaming others. Created upright.