

# The End of a Thing

Sunday, March 8, 2020

Mike Miller

Straight Paths Bible Church

Ecclesiastes 7:8 Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.

Ecclesiastes 7:1 A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth.

- I. I have to say some things first for the folks who listen to us each week and are unaware of what has been going on with us at this church.
  - A. This is a special day and it is just not possible to pass it by without saying some things this morning.
  - B. This property was given to us and our care almost 5 years ago when the First Baptist Church of Ellsinore disbanded after building this building 45 years ago.
  - C. The attendance at the First Baptist Church had dwindled for years and things had finally gotten to the point that they simply could not continue.
  - D. The last active members of that church are now a part of this church and are sitting in the pews this morning.
  - E. The church building itself is almost 22,000 sq. ft. which is far, far more than we need or can use for our church now.
  - F. The building is in critical need of some very expensive repairs, including a roof, leaking basement and worn out carpets, and many other problems, which are completely out of our means to be able to repair.
    - 1. The cost of repairs would be much more than the cost of a new building which would also be much more economical to maintain.
  - G. The church talked about what to do for over a year and then we decided to list the church building and try to sell it with the intention of using the money to build a new building on another piece of property.
  - H. We listed the property in August of last year and got an offer just before the listing expired in January. We closed on the property two days ago.
  - I. So this is the last Lord's Day there will be services in this building for the past 45 years – so it is a very special day here.
  - J. We kept the parsonage and the parking lot across the street from the church and we will be having services there until we can move into the new building.
  - K. So today we are very much aware of the end of a thing and we are excited and encouraged about the beginning of a new thing.
- II. There are many things about our perception of things that are upside down from God's view. (read Scriptures above now)
  - A. We like beginnings and we do not like endings.
  - B. Beginnings make us happy and endings make us sad.
  - C. We are sad when we should be happy, and happy when we should be sad.
  - D. We rejoice when we should mourn, and mourn when we should rejoice.
    - 1. We rejoice and weep for joy when a child is born into this world of sin, sorrow, pain, sickness, hatred, war, and perversion.

2. Then we weep for sorrow and are heartbroken when a dear saint of God who has fought the good fight and made it through this vale of sorrow, and in victory graduates to very presence of God and escapes this life of pain.
- E. We live too much in the past and very little or none in the future.
- F. We look back when we should look forward and we look forward when we should look back.
- G. We cherish feelings from the past and entertain none for the future.
- H. The end of a thing is somewhat of a shock to our soul and forces us to consider and evaluate everything again.
- I. We seldom do such a thing in the beginning of a thing.

- III. In the beginning of a thing we fail to consider the end of that thing.
- A. We are so caught up in the excitement of something new that it seems morbid to us to think about its end.
  - B. But wisdom is neglected if we do not consider the end in the very beginning.
  - C. Everything on this earth has a limited time of existence here and nothing lasts forever.
  - D. When entering into marriage neither party looks to the end of it – they are totally caught up in the new beginning of it without any thought of the end.
  - E. When our children are born we are so thrilled with their new life that we forget to consider that their life will end one day, too.

- IV. This truth applies to the wicked and to the righteous.
- A. For the righteous person who has grown in grace and knowledge of the Lord, the day of his death is the best day of his earthly life.
    1. He has been a blessing here and will be blessed throughout eternity.
    2. He has increased in wisdom and stature with God and each day brought him higher and closer to God.
    3. There are people left living that are better off because he lived.
    4. The world is a little or a lot better off than it was the day he was born.
  - B. As for the wicked, it is a good day for everyone else when they are removed from the affairs of earthly life.
    1. They bring destruction, lies, trouble, and pain to those they touch in this world.
    2. So the day they are removed from here it is certainly a better day than when they began their path of destruction.
    3. The only sadness about it is that it did not have to be that way, and that a person lived a life hating God and righteousness, and loved iniquity and doing evil.

- V. So the end of a thing is when we consider whether it was good or bad.
- A. The righteous are likened to a tree that bears fruit.
    1. They leave something behind them that blesses and sustains life.
    2. When they are gone they leave seeds that will continue to bring forth new life.
  - B. The wicked are likened to the chaff that the wind blows away.
    1. Their name shall be blotted out and they will be remembered no more.
  - C. This principle applies to churches as well as individual lives.
  - D. Churches are born, they exist for a time, and then they die.

1. A church is a living thing and this is the way for all living things on this earth.
2. When Jesus said, "...the gates of hell shall not prevail" against his church, He was speaking of the church triumphant, and obviously not local churches.
3. The thing with a church is that many times they die and someone keeps their corpse around for years trying to make it live again.
4. They keep trying to simply DO the same things they did when the church was young and alive, thinking that is what the life of a church is about.
5. But eventually the stench of death is too much to overcome and the church is finally declared dead by everyone.
6. I was very familiar with the church that once occupied this building and the people that made up that church.
7. I have many memories of being here when the church still lived.
8. There are other people who were here, too, that remember those things.
9. But that church died many years ago.
10. Some good people who loved that church tried for a long time to "bring it back" but were never able to make that happen.
11. While they tried the building that the church once occupied here deteriorated, just like a body does when the soul departs.

VI. The important question is "Did this church leave any fruit? Did they leave any seeds to perpetuate the life they once had?"

- A. The answer to that question is absolutely "yes!"
- B. I came here when I was a child, and then through all the years since I started preaching I have been here on many occasions.
  1. This pulpit was the first place I preached after I began to preach in 1981. (other than the church where I was a member)
- C. I know of at least 6 or 7 men who are pastoring churches now who were called to preach and sent out from this church.
- D. I know of many families who are in other churches now that were saved and began their Christian lives here in this place.
- E. I know many people who sat in these pews who have gone to eternity and their name is still a blessing just to hear.
- F. Not only all this, but out of the ruins of what was here for many years, we are able to continue the work of God in a new place – THAT is part of the fruit of the life of the church that once was here.

VII. So the last Lord's Day services in this room are a time of mixed emotions for me and for all of us here.

- A. While we are looking forward with excitement to what the Lord has for us ahead we are grieving the end of something that should have been buried long ago.
- B. We are remembering with fondness and thankfulness what once was here.
- C. We are honoring those faithful and good people who were part of it.
- D. Death is always a time of mourning for us in this life, but we must remember this truth: that the end of a thing is better than the beginning.
- E. Because this church lived there will be many more souls in heaven than the day they dedicated this building.
- F. Because this church lived the Word of God is still being preached all around this country and the world.

- G. Because this church lived we are going to be able to build a new building and continue the work of God here in the same little town in a different generation.
- H. So no matter what bad things might have happened here, or what others may say, this is a better day than when this church began because eternity is richer and the world is a little better because they lived.
- I. And to the people who once served God here and feel sadness about what has happened I would like to say that we feel the same as you do about it.
  - 1. We mourn the death of church where we were blessed and helped, and who supported us in the ministry for many years.
  - 2. But we know that true life of that church lives on and will share in whatever God is pleased to bless Straight Paths Bible Church with in the years ahead.
  - 3. We mourn with you, and we hope you will rejoice with us and pray for us as we take what was passed to us and go forward with God's help and blessing.

- VIII. Now, what we need to consider is that our church may very likely follow the same path someday.
  - A. We will do all we can to keep this church healthy so that it may live as long as possible.
  - B. We may love one another, and love God, and love the work of God, but individual lives cannot be sustained forever on this earth now because of the corruption of this world.
  - C. Just like this old house here, the church will stand and remain strong until the elements of the world start getting inside.
    - 1. When the roof and the walls of protection are breached by worldly philosophies and immorality the church will not have long to live.
  - D. When this day comes for this church will it be possible to say of us that it was a good thing and blessing to God and the world that we lived?
  - E. Will we make a difference in this world? In the lives of people? ...for eternity?
  - F. Will we leave anything behind when we are gone that will continue to bless people and sustain the spiritual lives of those who are still here?
  - G. While we are rejoicing in a new beginning, let's be wise enough to look to the end.
  - H. Let us redeem the time and make the most of the opportunity God has given us to do something for the souls of men and for the kingdom of God.
  - I. Let us guard diligently against the wiles of the devil who would sow discord and strife among us and cause an untimely death to the church.
  - J. Let us never forget those who came before us and whose faithfulness, work, and sacrifice left us with the means to continue, and let us always honor their memory.
  - K. The cup has been passed to us, so ...

**Hebrews 12:1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us,**