

Ecclesiastes- Chapter 7 Part 2

If you would please be turning with me in your Bibles to the seventh chapter of the book of Ecclesiastes where we will pick right up on where we left off last week. We do have a business meeting scheduled in a little bit so I'm going to do my best to stay on point to leave sufficient time for that.

Now, for those that are just joining us perhaps over Facebook or some other internet platform we have been working our way through this book and we have been doing so at a pretty rapid pace I think so far, but so far I think we have had a pretty good study nonetheless.

What we have seen so far is the very things that Solomon has been speaking about in this book are the same kind of things that we are still dealing with 3000 years later.

You see, when it comes to the nature of man, to borrow some words from Solomon, there really is nothing new under the sun is there? We might have more stuff and more comforts and more technology, but the hearts of the men and women that crafted all that stuff is still the same.

And understand that as we look at the misery of human futility that Solomon has been taking us through, he has been writing primarily from the perspective of the individual that is living life under the sun, that is life apart from God.

The one who cares not of pleasing his maker. The one who has no desire to live his life under heaven, but rather the one who chases after one thing or another all their life and never able to hold on to anything in the end. Why? Because in that end we can't take anything with us.

What we have seen is that everything we strive for money, possessions, pleasures, you name it. Whatever it is under the sun, it all comes to a crashing end when man closes his eyes for the

last time. And then man must consider what comes next or is there any next at all? And those are good questions. It's the kind of question that a wise man would ask because God has placed eternity in the hearts of man. So those are the kinds of thing we have been looking at in this book.

That is until we have come to chapter 7 last week. This chapter right from the start appears to be a very different feeling type of chapter compared to what we have seen so far. This chapter is more proverb like as opposed to narrative like. That is, we don't have several verses describing one kind of individual after another, but rather more a verse or two of standalone thoughts that are snippets of wisdom to live a good life here on this earth.

Now before I get started, I want to read the chapter in its entirety because we are having to bust up this chapter so much I don't want us to lose the feel of it.

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

Ecc 7:2 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 his heart.

Ecc 7:3 Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better.

Ecc 7:4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.

Ecc 7:5 It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools.

Ecc 7:6 For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity.

Ecc 7:7 Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart.

Ecc 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.

Ecc 7:9 Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools.

Ecc 7:10 Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.

Ecc 7:11 Wisdom is good with an inheritance: and by it there is profit to them that see the sun.

Ecc 7:12 For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.

Ecc 7:13 Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?

Ecc 7:14 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.

Ecc 7:15 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.

Ecc 7:16 Be not righteous over much; neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself?

Ecc 7:17 Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?

Ecc 7:18 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.

Ecc 7:19 Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city.

Ecc 7:20 For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

Ecc 7:21 Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee:

Ecc 7:22 For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.

Ecc 7:23 All this have I proved by wisdom: I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me.

Ecc 7:24 That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?

Ecc 7:25 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:

Ecc 7:26 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.

Ecc 7:27 Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account:

Ecc 7:28 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.

Ecc 7:29 Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

I know that is more reading than we normally do, but sometimes that is for the best. Maybe some of those verses grabbed your attention as we read through them. Perhaps verses you have heard quoted at least in part before. Lot of good things in here. Last time we made it through verse 9 and I hoped to look at the rest of the chapter today, but it turns out there is too much here to do so, so we will have at least one more week in this chapter.

Look back with me in verse 10.

Ecc 7:10 Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.

I had hoped to cover this verse last week, but it would have taken a little too much time. You see, this is one of those verses that really grabbed my attention last week as I was studying because it described me at that moment in time. .

You might recall, last Sunday I went over to Big Creek Baptist Church for their Homecoming service to preach in their afternoon service.

Now Homecoming at Big Creek is one of those events that always stood out in my mind because this of course is the church that I grew up in and for as long as I can remember there has always been a Homecoming service in the month of September.

And it stands out to me I suppose more than any other because I didn't grow up having fellowship dinners on the third Sunday's. At best a few times a year we would have a meal, but nothing matched the preparation of Homecoming. On Homecoming everyone pitched in from bringing food, to setting up tables on the lawn, carrying chairs- everyone pitched in. On Homecoming everything was different than the other 51 weeks of the year. There was joy in the air.

I remember how the parking lot would be full and the attendance would be largest of the year as people would make it a special point to be there and I have to say, I just looked forward to it every year. It was a long day. It was an exhausting day, but it was just so satisfying. That's probably the reason when I came here, I really wanted to have a special Homecoming day of our own and I am looking forward to that next month by the way.

That all said, as I reflected on Big Creek's Homecoming last week as I prepared, I kept thinking about the then and now. You see, I went knowing the general trend over the last few years and there was a bit of sadness to go along with it. You see times have changed. People have died. People have moved away. Granny's punch isn't served in that old crock. People have stopped coming like they used too, the parking lot is far from full and the house of God isn't filled to capacity like it used to be. It isn't even filled to the point of what a slow attendance Sunday was in my youth and it saddens me.

Now, I told you this verse got me because it was describing me. I want you to think about the things I just said. How I was reflecting on the past and thinking about how great it was compared to now because what I was doing is exactly what Solomon is warning us here not to do.

You see humans tend to forget that things didn't used to be perfect then either. We look at how things are right now and know all the troubles and trials going on. We know the struggles that people are going through right now and we romanticize a past where we have forgotten the imperfections and all we see are how great things were in the good old days.

Now I used the example of Big Creek because that is where my past came from. That's the only past I know. However, for some of you like Reva and Barbara and Dreama when she can make it, these ladies who have been at Grace for a half a century they can look back on the good old days here at Grace when hundreds passed through the doors every week while most of us have never seen that nor can imagine that ever happened. I think Reva must have held every baby that grew up in Ceredo. Every time I meet someone that grew up in this town that came to church here as a kid, they mention her. So that was the past here at Grace. A place where Sunday's were bustling with vibrancy.

Times are different now though too, when we see the pews even half full that excites some of us, but to them it's not what it used to be. In essence, we have become just like those that were there for the foundation of the second temple when the young men cried out in joy over the great work being done and the old men crying because it was nothing compared to the good old days of Solomon's temple.

So, our nature is to look back and think times were better. Times were easier. The world was a better place. The reality is though if you could transport yourself back to 30 or 50 years ago and talk to those people, they would be telling you how great life was when they were young and they had to open the windows of the church building for people to hear the preaching outside because there was no room for the church to hold them all.

Folks it is good to remember the past. It is good to celebrate those kinds of occasions like Homecoming and think about some of the saints that passed on, but we can't live our lives in the past. We can't as individuals and for that matter we can't as a church.

We only have one life to live. One life to serve the Lord with and we can't live it in the past. We can't talk about the glory days and forget the day we are living in.

Just as true, by the way, we can't live our lives in the future. Sometimes we just keep putting off doing certain things. Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow. Plan, plan, plan and one monkey wrench gets tossed in our plans, something we didn't expect and so we do nothing at all. Not to mention none of us have the promise of living another day in the first place.

Folks, I know you know this, but the only time we have to work with for sure is not the past. It is not the future. Today is the day we live in. Today is the day in which we serve. We can only live with certainty right now in the here and now. This time alone is where we serve God and live a life pleasing before him.

So again, the premise of this verse is that it is unwise to look at our current situation and begin to wonder why things were better in the past, because things were never as perfect as we remember and not only that we know that times are going to change, but they are changing because it is his will. God never promised the world was going to be a better place and people would be knocking the doors down to come to church on Sunday. The world is not getting better it's getting colder.

Now because it is getting colder that doesn't relieve us of our responsibility in inviting others and witnessing to others. It means we need to work that much harder in doing these things.

Let's read on. Again, another proverb and we are breaking thought with what was just said. But another verse of wisdom.

Ecc 7:11 Wisdom is good with an inheritance: and by it there is profit to them that see the sun.

This is one of those verses it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out. Solomon says that a person who has wisdom and an inheritance to walk into is in a good situation or another way of saying it is an inheritance is a good thing when there is wisdom to go along with it.

Let me give you an example of the contrary, not long after my family and I came to Grace, we bought the home we are in now. Not long after that, a couple of brothers who were in their early 20's came into an inheritance. Got a good house with a pool down the street and they systematically began to spend everything they had on things with no lasting value, partying with a house full of young friends, and in the end they had nothing to show for it and had to sell the house and the neighborhood has been much quieter ever since.

Those brothers had a good inheritance that should have lasted years, but no wisdom to use it wisely. It was a sad situation to watch. But you see that happens all the time. As the old phrase goes, the fool and his money are soon parted.

Now this next verse goes along with the one that we just read. Our next verse shows how wisdom and an inheritance are an advantage to a person.

Ecc 7:12 For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it.

Let's think about what is being said here. The word defense speaks of protection or shelter. A person with wisdom uses that wisdom to make wise decisions about things that will help protect them. A wise person will plan on provision for the future. Wisdom keeps a person from making

foolish decisions that lead to hurt. Wisdom is a defense.

Solomon also says money also provides defense. It provides protection. With enough money a person could build a strong home and even put a wall around it. Could hire people to watch the gates. You get my point.

If you have enough money you can have a guy name Guido following you around all the time who is always watching your back. So, money is a defense.

But money without wisdom doesn't last and when the money is gone so is the protection it provides right?

So, that is where the second part of this verse comes into play. The excellency of knowledge which is another way of saying wisdom is better than money alone. It is the greater of the two because wisdom allows the one with money to live a fulfilled life because his priorities, but just as true a wise man with little money knows how to protect himself even though his pockets are nearly empty.

So, wisdom with money is great, but given the choice between wisdom and money, we should seek wisdom every time. Solomon has made that point over and over in this book.

Let's move on.

Ecc 7:13 Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?

Some of you have no doubt heard this verse at least in part before. We often hear it attached to the way of man, that he is bent and crooked and can't straighten himself out because of his own depravity.

That is all true. Perhaps not the thought though Solomon is speaking of here in particular. What

Solomon is considering here is that God has ordained all things. He is sovereign and man cannot change the will of God even when it isn't pleasant to our own eyes.

Solomon uses the example of something crooked. Men don't tend to aesthetically like the appearance of things that aren't straight and level. Man likes what is pleasing to the eye in life and if he could he would always take that route. Just like Lot looked over the plains around Sodom. Man likes what looks good. Man always looks to what is pleasing to the eyes.

Not all things in life are pleasing to the sight. Not all things work out like we want them and we never will because we can't change the will and direction of God.

Let's keep reading.

Ecc 7:14 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.

The verse before is one of the longer in this chapter, but the point of the verse is not hard to understand. God brings times of joy and prosperity in our lives and God also allows and sovereignly ordains those times of adversity as well. God brings the sunshine and the rain.

The last part of our verse is just a reminder that none of us know what tomorrow is going to bring, but know that God has ordained it.

It's been a long time since we have sung the song, but I know you remember it all too well.

*I don't know about tomorrow
I just live from day to day
I don't borrow from the sunshine
For it's skies may turn to gray*

*I don't worry o'er the future
For I know what Jesus said
And today I'll walk beside Him
For He knows what lies ahead*

*Many things about tomorrow
I don't seem to understand
But I know who holds tomorrow
And I know who holds my hand*

Good lyrics. Good song. We need to try to work it back into the playlist sometime. That song is what this verse is all about though. Trusting God tomorrow in the good times and the hard times knowing he's the one in control.

You don't have that peace when you are living life under the sun apart from God. You can only have that peace when you have been made wise to the Father through the preaching of the Son. It is only through him that we have that peace that passeth understanding in the good times and the bad times.

Let's move on to the next thought which will be our last for the day.

Ecc 7:15 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.

Solomon states for us something we have all seen in our lives. Sometimes the good die young and sometimes the wicked live a long time.

How many times have we questioned that in our minds when we see a young person die in an accident? How many times do we question the good mother that dies of cancer before her kids hardly have time to remember her face.

And then there is the guy that lives across the road that swears at the neighbors. Curses his own aged mother. Kicks the dog when it walks by. Maybe you know that kind of guy or the

kind of guy that just seems to stir up trouble everywhere he goes and that guy lives to be old a hateful all the days of his life.

How many times if even in our minds have we questioned why God should let the heathen rage as saints are seemingly taken way to young? We've all wondered when we see these things. Let's not pretend we have never questioned why God does what he does.

But consider for a moment what awaits the wicked man who lives his life under the sun when he is buried? It isn't just a pile a dirt is it?

No, that man will lift-up his head in hell and be tormented in flames. Not for a few days or few years. It is for all of eternity. This life under the sun is the best he can ever hope for.

On the flip side though. How about the one that dies early in Christ. What happens to them? They will go to be in the presence of the Lord. There will be no missing of this life at all.

So then, when the righteous man or woman dies at even a young age it might be a loss to those that love them, but to them it is gain. Did not Paul echo that very thought.

Php 1:21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

To die in Christ is gain no matter the age. Loss to us on this earth left behind, but the death of a saint is the greatest gain any man, woman, boy, or girl could ever know.

So, when we look around the world and we see the wicked die old just remember this was the best they will ever know and when you see the righteous die young, remember this too- this life was the worst of what they will see from then on.

Whether it be life or death and whether it is young or old, there is no unrighteousness with

God. He is the one who gives life and has every right to take it away whenever he sees fit.

Now we are going to end there tonight, but I hope and pray the message has been a blessing to you.

Let's dismiss in prayer.