

ECCLESIASTES 7

WISE WORDS FROM THE PREACHER

The Preacher opens this chapter by laying down some great truths which seem to be paradoxes to the unthinking part of mankind – which sadly, is in the majority. The honor of virtuous piety and honesty is more desirable than all the wealth and pleasure in this world. “A good name,” says the wise man, “is better than precious ointment” (verse 1). Many who do not fear God, nor care for man, think much of losing their good name. It is very good to have a name for moral worth, but will your character bear God’s inspection? That is the great question. If your good name consists merely in human merit, then you are much to be pitied! This will avail you nothing in the end. Has Christ said of you, “I will write upon him my new name?” (Rev. 3:12) Is Christ the heart, the Head, and the substance of your character? Are your merits His merits? Is His name your only trust? Are His cross and blood the Rock upon which you stand? Is His character the ground of your Christian life?

The wise man also teaches us that it will do more good to go to a funeral than to a feast. We may lawfully go to either; for our Savior Himself feasted at the wedding of His friend in Cana, and also wept at the grave of His friend in Bethany. But in consideration of how easily inclined we are to be vain and indulge the flesh, it is best for us to go to the house of mourning. It is better to have our corruptions mortified by the rebukes of the wise than to have them gratified by the songs of fools. The child of God finds a pleasure in the house of woe that he does not find in worldly merriment – not because it makes him glad to hear the mourner’s sobs and to see their tears, but because the Lord Jesus is present with him there! The house of mourning is a blessing because it presents a void that must be filled, sorrow that must be comforted, and corruption that must be turned to glory – and all these things can only be satisfied in Christ!

Solomon has already spoken of the great tyranny and oppressions which he had seen “under the sun,” which cause much grief and discouragement among those who are virtuous and pious. In verses 7-10, he acknowledges that the temptation to be depressed at such sights is indeed a strong one. But he also points out that the power of tyrants will ultimately be broken, and the oppressed will then be relieved and recompensed. “Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof” (verse 8). Better was the end of Moses’ interviews with the proud and oppressive Pharaoh, when Israel was brought forth with triumph, than the beginning of them, when the quota of bricks was doubled and everything looked discouraging indeed. The wise man also gives us some good advice, which is especially useful in times when we are about to go insane by witnessing

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ Solomon recommends various means to arm ourselves against the vanities that he has spoken of – verses 1-22
- ❖ He laments his own sin and gives his observations thereon – verses 23-29

all the cruelty of tyrannical despots around the world. We ought to be clothed with humility and patience, and to submit to the will of God – waiting and expecting a good outcome in the Lord’s own good time. The wise man recommends that we make the best of the place and circumstances we are in, and not to foolishly reflect upon the Providence of God for not making our times as pleasant as we imagine that “the good old days” were. It is folly to cry for the badness of our times, when we have more reason to cry for the badness of our own hearts; and even in these times, we still enjoy many mercies. God has always been good, but men have always been bad since the Fall in Eden.



Solomon recommends wisdom to us as the best antidote against these distempers of mind which we are liable to, by reason of the vanity and vexation of spirit in the things of this world. Wisdom is as good as an inheritance, and even better; for it shelters us from the storms and scorching heat of trouble. Wealth will not lengthen out our natural life, but true wisdom will give spiritual life and strengthen us for service – even under our sufferings. The wise man gives several other pieces of good advice in verses 11-22.

In Solomon’s search into the nature and reason of things, he had been miserably deluded. But now, beginning in verse 23, he speaks with Godly sorrow. He now discovered – more than ever before – the evil of the great sin of which he had been guilty in loving many heathen women (1 Kings 11:1). And here he warns others against the sins into which he himself had been betrayed. Many a Godly man can thankfully acknowledge that he has found a prudent, virtuous woman in the wife of his heart; but those who have followed in Solomon’s footsteps cannot expect to find such a lady. Among the thousand women whom he had taken to himself, he had not found even one true maiden of virtue.

But this corruption among womanhood was simply one branch of the corruption of humanity in general. “Behold, this only have I found,” says the Preacher, “that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.” As the result of his meditations upon the problem of human life, Solomon felt sure of one thing: neither men nor women are what God had created them to be. But we can cherish a hope for the human race which the Preacher does not seem to have felt. Man has devised sin, but God has devised salvation! “Where sin hath abounded, grace doth much more abound.” The cross of Jesus is God’s method of recovering sinners to uprightness. And in proportion as the human race comes under the influence of the Divine Redeemer, both men and women will become more and more what God made them to be! With holy wisdom, they will then seek out “inventions” whereby they may glorify God, and help each other to live the life of righteousness and love!

Lord, we are truly guilty of devising many methods of fighting against You. Thank You that where sin has abounded, Your grace has abounded even more! Amen.