

## **Ecclesiastes 7:1-6 – The Better Desires**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Solomon displayed his God-given wisdom not only in his good judgments as king and military leader, but also in his writings. One of the important judgments he made in his writings is pointing out that many (not all) of the pleasures of this life are properly enjoyed, but they do not satisfy the soul. That is why he called them vanities. Being married was good, construction projects were good, knowledge was good, wine was good, and music was good. But none of these things satisfied the needs of the soul. So Solomon pointed men to God – the ultimate source of satisfaction. (Chapter 5). From Chapter 6 and now in Chapter 7, you now see that Solomon positively showed what things man needed to get having received a satisfied soul – children who have their full satisfaction in God. Today we will look at 2 more of these things that a soul-satisfied covenant child should desire.

Our headings are: A **Good Reputation in Life**, and A **Serious Disposition Toward Life**.

Our goals are: **That, based on the promises of Christ and your duty to him, you will endeavor to acquire and use these gifts for your good and Christ's glory**.

### **A Good Reputation in Life**

1 A good name is better than precious ointment, And the day of death than the day of one's birth;

1. Solomon said that a good name was to be preferred over expensive perfumes. But what does it mean to have a good name? To have a good name means to have a good reputation.

2. How do you get a good name – that good reputation? A good name is earned. It is earned by proper living. But since you are sinners, how do you as get a good name? Is it simply by being nice to nasty people? Solomon wrote that Christ has a great reputation. His good name is like an alluring perfume. You get it from him! He gave a good name to his Bride. Songs of Solomon 1:3 Because of the fragrance of your good ointments, Your name is ointment poured forth; Therefore the virgins love you.

This is similar to what John said in Revelation – as one of the reasons the church will endure persecution for the Lord. The church knew what the Lord had done for her so she was willing to testify of her relationship with him...and seek to produce children for him – continuing his good name. Christian's good name was earned by Christ and give to those who are joined to him. And the Christian's name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life – that marriage registry in heaven.

Isaiah 56:5 Even to them I will give, in My house And within My walls, a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name That shall not be cut off.

Psalms 112:6 Surely he will never be shaken; The righteous will be in everlasting remembrance.

And Christ will confess you before his Father in heaven. You will be able to say: "I deserve to have my name and my person in heaven because of Jesus Christ." And it is this good name that is most important of all. Someone wrote: "Better is a good name the righteous get in this world, than the anointing oil which was poured upon the heads of kings and priests." But of course the truly "good name" is the one you get from Christ. You are counted by God as faithfully keeping the law...you are counted this way because you were in Christ when he live and died for you.

3. The good name of the Christian is a benefit to his family and his public life. Consider some passages of Scripture that speak how a Christian uses that good name!

2Corinthians 2:14 Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. 15 For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

Romans 1:8 First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

You can see that there is an evangelistic benefit of having a good name. So it is not about getting others to know your name...to have your name up in Neon Lights, it is to cause others to see Jesus and when they see and believe in Jesus, then Jesus is glorified. A good smell is always pleasant in the stench of sins and rebellion. And more, you also bring reward to you...like Mary Magdalene.

Matthew 26:13 "Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her."

Mary used precious ointment...but the Lord said her good name was better than the ointment. You honor her today.

4. A good name is a most desirable characteristic in a Christian so you must desire and work for it. And remember, it is a good name that God knows is good...not a good name by fooling people by pretending to be nice...not a good name that by doing things in order that people might like you.

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

And remember brothers and sisters, the closer you are to Christ, the more you can draw from his good name.

5. And because you have Christ's good name, he will preserve you. He doesn't want his name tarnished. He enters into an eternal union with you.

Isaiah 62:3 You shall also be a crown of glory In the hand of the LORD, And a royal diadem In the hand of your God. 4 You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; For the LORD delights in you, And your land shall be married.

6. What about the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the verse...**about the day of death being better than the day of birth?** (Now there have been tribes like those in the Caucasus (Caw-ca-sus) Mountains that mourned when a child was born and rejoiced when someone died, but that is not a Christian view of things. The Greeks used to call the day of a baby's birth "beginning of his misery day.") Was Solomon hopeless about life, saying that dying was better than living? No. Solomon wasn't saying that dying was better than living. He knew better. Solomon was speaking of death figuratively - in terms of judgment. Judgment Day, the day of death, will be a better day for those believers who suffer in this life. Judgment Day will be a day in which they will reap their rewards. Death was ground for crying and mourning for a Christian. Jesus himself cried when his friend died. But judgment day was not ground for crying. It will be a day for rejoicing. For then the believer will be in total freedom from sin, and death, and hell. His freedom came through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. This was a promise from God...throughout the Bible.

Ezekiel 36: 25 "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

## **A Serious Disposition Toward Life**

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

1. Solomon then explained the greater benefit of reflecting on serious issues like life and death. Of course he wasn't referring to the hypocritical sadness of the Pharisees and Scribes who pretended to be sad in order to promote themselves in the eyes of the people and poach on the wealth of widows.

2. So why was he pointing to what seems to be a morose thing: that you must **prefer a funeral over a wedding feast, for instance?** Solomon said this because he knew that a man would think of more serious matters when he is at a funeral.

a. You see the hand of God and think of the brevity of life. For instance, you might think that there was one who there talking to you a few days before...and then he is no more...and his body begins to rot, living just 70 or 80 years.

b. You think about the fact that there is no age for dying....like the little oranges falling to the ground but the ripe ones stay on the tree and never really rot. Thinking that you too could die at anytime might help you to live better. And you would endeavor to take time with your children... to prepare them for life and death.

c. You think of the relationships that were broken and you have not repaired, people with whom you are still at odds. And you realize that you shouldn't leave this world with a bad reputation.

d. You think of sin you still have to confess to the Lord and to others, but haven't yet done so. In other words, being at a funeral is helpful to your sanctification and your evangelization.

e. You think about the fact whether you are fully prepared to meet the Lord if you died that night.

f. And even more, you would think of your need to cry with those who cry...and mourn with those who mourn.

g. Going to a funeral was also true psychotherapy... The Jews often kept mourning for a week or more after the person was buried. Mourning made people come to terms with the death of their loved one. If you resorted to partying when someone died, when you became sober, the problem would still be there. But "*By a sad countenance the heart is made better.*" In other words, seeing a person dead and then buried – and crying about it and feeling the loss, helped one to deal with the situation better.

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

3. While the wise learns the benefits of a funeral, those at a wedding feast focus on simpler matters and pleasures... like what is the food like, or what kind of wine the hosts are serving, or what kind of dress the bride has, or what is the cake like. Little thought is given to more serious matters – matters that affect how you live before the Lord. It is all about the party. And often the result is a bad headache and a hangover from drinking too much.

Isaiah 59:5 They hatch vipers' eggs and weave the spider's web; He who eats of their eggs dies, And from that which is crushed a viper breaks out.

So a funeral makes you think more of your duty to God than a wedding feast. A funeral is more useful than a festival. As the saying goes: April showers do bring out the May flowers.

But don't misunderstand. Solomon is not saying that laughing is bad. He was just saying that those who become preoccupied with laughing don't learn the lessons of those who are more serious in their approaches to life. Everything in life is not a joke!

5 It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise Than for a man to hear the song of fools.

4. A second thing that Solomon advocates is that listening to rebuke is better than listening to patronizing or flattering speeches. This is a better disposition to keep.

You see, some people may not correct you because they want to earn your approval or get something from you.

Consider what Solomon said regarding the benefit of those who listen to good advice – even though they might be part of a rebuke!

Proverbs 15:31 The ear that hears the rebukes of life Will abide among the wise. 32 He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, But he who heeds rebuke gets understanding.

Proverbs 17:10 Rebuke is more effective for a wise man Than a hundred blows on a fool.

Proverbs 27:6 Faithful are the wounds of a friend. But the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.

Seneca described flattery as a poison that lulls one to sleep and slowly kills. It is Satan's lullaby.

6 For like the crackling of thorns under a pot, So is the laughter of the fool. This also is vanity.

5. You see, laughing is beneficial only to a very limited extent. That is why Solomon compared laughing to thorns. Thorns are only fit to be burned up...and they make noise...they crackle...but then they are soon gone and produce little heat. Much noise, little fire. They are briar and bramble...so they are of very little use. On the other hand, wise men who take advice of the wise were like good dried cow-dung...they may be slow, but gave good heat for cooking.

### **Conclusion:**

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Two things you should concentrate on getting are: **A good name** in life **and a good disposition** toward life. That good name comes from Christ giving you a new heart, and new record, and a new life. (Ezekiel 36) And he gives you a new name to go with it. You are then to reflect that good name to the world and shine your light for Christ. Throw his name around. Let the world know that you belong to him. Let them know that they can come to him. Let your family name shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify the Father in heaven.

That **good disposition** toward life must cause you to reflect on things that are really important – like reflecting on life and death issues. You must not become preoccupied with the simple things in this life. All of this life will pass away. Use your time in this life to prepare for the next life – a life that will last for eternity. When you have a proper view of life you will then work harder for Christ. You will not stop till the message of Christ is heard early and often by those who are in darkness. You will not give up teaching your children. You will long for worship each Sunday.

Finally, those who are not Christians let me ask you: Do you want that good name...that name that is recorded in heaven? It is free. Ask God to give it to you because Christ died for you! If you do this, God will not only save you, but he will also give you a brand new in fullness of true joy.