

**Ecclesiastes 7: 5-9; “The Rebuke of the Wise”, Sermon # 46 in the series –  
“Remember Your Creator”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on  
October 14th, 2018, in Afternoon Worship Service.**

The words of verse 5, “It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise”, are a continuation of the theme of “a heart being made better by a sad countenance,” which is found in verse 3. The experience of sadness, if truly learned from a Biblically correct perspective, will be of eternal benefit to you. The last time that I preached to you from this book, I explained to you that the day of one’s death is better than the day of one’s birth, if one has a good name with God. But to be able to come to that place where you do have a good name with God involves much humbling of yourself to see the truth about yourself which God would have you to learn. The sadness and sorrow of mourning over your mistakes and sins will, by the grace of God, lead you to repentance, and then ultimately to the true and real and lasting joy of having God as your portion in all things. Whereas feasting and laughing to forget the trials of life and your responsibility to God; to live to Him; will only lead you to God’s judgment and hell.

So who is the happier in the end; the one who mourns over their sins and their ways now, while they have the time to do so, and finds repentance and favor with God and blessedness forever? Or the one who always wants to be in the house of mirth and feasting, and then misses out on the real spiritual blessings of life? People who only love laughing and feasting miss out on eternal life; because their time to mourn was wasted away, and they perish in their sin. Oh, let us pray to wake up and see what this life is all about. Because it has consequences for us which will last throughout all eternity. This afternoon we want to look at a part of the means which God uses to turn sinful men to righteousness and to a good end. He uses rebuke. And here in verse 5 it tells us that He uses the “rebuke of the wise” to accomplish this good end.

I think that we can legitimately say that according to God and to the Bible, much of what we learn about what is good and right for us do in this life, is taught to us by the words of godly people, and their example. It does not come to us automatically by our own experience of life; it comes to us by being told things which we at first might not want to hear, by people who are wise. And certainly Solomon is not talking about those people who are worldly-wise rebuking us; he is talking about those people who are wise in the sight of God. They know God, and as a result of knowing God, coupled with their experience of life; they have something to say to you. And sometimes it may come to you as a rebuke. So, 1<sup>st</sup> of all – We want to think about why it is better to hear this rebuke than the song of fools. And then 2<sup>nd</sup> – We want to think about how it is good for a wise man to convey a rebuke. And then 3<sup>rd</sup> – We want to think about how it is better to be patient in spirit in relation to both giving rebuke and taking rebuke. May God be working in our hearts as we think about these things.

**1<sup>st</sup> – Why is it better to hear the rebuke of the wise than the song of fools?**  
(verses 5 and 6)

The answer is that the song of fools will only bring to them, or to you, only a temporary and a false comfort, if you listen to those songs. And, those songs will deceive them and you into thinking that real comfort and encouragement can be found by that means. The reason that those songs cannot bring lasting comfort and encouragement because there is no spiritual substance of truth which can feed and satisfy your eternal soul in them. It is like the “crackling of thorns under a pot”. When fire is set to those thorns, it makes a loud crackling noise which lasts for a very short time and it is gone. It may draw attention to itself and it may cause surprise and laughter, but it cannot cook the food in the pot. It cannot bring the water to a boil. The song of the fool will not bring the satisfaction that really lasts or satisfies. It cannot bring saving health or strength or nourishment to your eternal soul.

This is where many people, old and young, need a rebuke in our generation. Many are listening to the songs of fools continually, on the radio, on their phones, and on their computer. A fool, the Bible says, is a person who does not know God. But many people in our day go to the musical concerts of fools and follow their lead in how they think about their life and a hundred other things, by listening to the words of their songs. The songs that they sing are songs of people who do not know God and who only speak from their own minds and observations of life, rather than listening to and singing the songs of Zion which are based on the truth of the Bible. This is where even Christians are sometimes deceived. They allow the songs of Zion, the hymns and psalms of the faith, to take second place to the songs of the world in their heart. But you will only be poorer for allowing that to take place. You need to turn away from the vanity of the songs of this world and the philosophy that they convey. You need to hear and heed the rebuke of the wise.

Let me give you a few verses to confirm this. Exodus Chapter 14, verse 30 and following. "So the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore." "Thus Israel saw the great work which the Lord had done in Egypt; so the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses." "Then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying: 'I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!'" "The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation." Now, you will notice that they did not sing one of the songs of the Egyptians. They might have had to listen to the top 40 of the Egyptians for their whole life, but they were not going to sing their songs any more, even if they had learned them in the past. They sang the praise of God who had delivered them from their bondage in Egypt. If you are delivered from your bondage to sin and from the mindset of this world you will find yourself singing the songs of the world less and less, and the songs of Zion more and more.

Do not let God be robbed of the glory that you should be giving Him day by day in the songs that you listen to, and the songs that you sing. Sing the songs of Zion. Turn with me to Ephesians Chapter 5, verse 15. See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." "Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is." "And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God." There is the rebuke of the wise. "Walk circumspectly." "Don't be a fool." "Redeem the time." "Don't be drunk with wine." "Be filled with the Spirit." And what is the indication of the filling of the Spirit? It is that you will be "singing songs and hymns and spiritual song, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Do you do this? Is the Lord your song?

Turn with me to Isaiah 12. "And in that day you will say: 'O Lord, I will praise You; though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.'" "Behold God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; for YAH, the Lord, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation." "Therefore you will joyfully draw water from the wells of salvation." You can see from these verses can't you; that eternal comfort and lasting joy come from the Lord being your song and becoming more and more your song. Receive the rebuke if you never have before. Perhaps you have loved the songs of the world more than the songs of Zion. You need to repent of this. You are wasting your own time and you are not fulfilling the purpose of the Lord in relation to why He has saved you. It is to glorify him. It is to honor Him. And in honoring Him, He will honor you.

Turn with me to Proverbs 15, verse 31. "The ear that hears the rebukes of life will abide among the wise." "He who disdains instruction despises his own soul, but he who heeds rebuke gets understanding." The fear of the Lord is the instruction of wisdom, and before honor is

humility.” Oh how important it is to hear the rebukes of the wise; the rebukes of life. When you do, you will abide among the wise. You will be in the place where your soul will be strengthened and richly blessed.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – We want to think together of how a wise man should convey a rebuke.**

(verse 7)

“Surely oppression destroys a wise man’s reason, and a bribe debases the heart.” This could possibly refer to a wise man’s being oppressed, or a wise man receiving a bribe. This makes him mad when he sees oppression taking place or people being bribed. If this continues weighing on his mind, it debases his own reason. But the whole context of verse 5-9 seems to me to focus on how a wise man, or one who would be a wise man, is to conduct himself. Therefore I will offer this interpretation. Sometimes when we as Christians think that we see what is wrong with someone else, we are tempted to come to them in the strength of our flesh and point it out to them. And, if we are a person in authority as a parent, or an office-bearer in the church, or an employer, we might think that if we can just convey our words of rebuke with enough force, or if we can just offer that person enough incentives; then we will see them come to the place where they will obey God’s word. But this will never do. This kind of a tactic debases the wise man’s reason.

We need to see that people do not really change except by God’s grace. They may need to be told where they are wrong; they may need to be rebuked, but we should be careful how we do it. We ourselves must have a right spirit. We do not change other people in the right way if we oppress them or bribe them to do what is right. How does a wise man convey a rebuke then? Well, turn to Galatians 6, verse 1. “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” Here is a person overtaken in a fault, and we who see this sin and would go to confront him must go with the mindset of restoring him, and doing it in a spirit of gentleness. Think of how you would want to be treated in such circumstances and act accordingly. For a person “overtaken in a fault”, one who doesn’t seem to understand that he has done something wrong; gentleness in rebuke is the order of the day.

Now turn with me to Titus Chapter 1, verse 10. Speaking of the duty of an elder in the church to be able to teach sound doctrine and to convict those who contradict, it says here: “For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.” “One of them, a prophet of their own said, ‘Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.’” “This testimony is true.” “Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith.” Here we find the Cretans were people who had developed a pattern of living that needed to be reprovved. They were “insubordinate”. And because they were so insensitive to their own sin, they were to be “rebuked sharply.”

To rebuke in a righteous way you must consider what kind of sin or weakness, or disobedience, you are looking at. And then your rebuke can be righteously given. Here the people were believers, but they tended to be lazy and gluttons. They needed to learn self-control. They needed to speak the truth and not lie. So they would need to be rebuked sharply. You will say to me, “Won’t I get in trouble if I attempt to do this as an elder or one in authority?” Well, turn with me to Proverbs Chapter 9, verse 7. “He who corrects a scoffer gets shame for himself, and he who rebukes a wicked man only harms himself.” “Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you.” “Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you.” Now, you can see the principle here, can’t you? If a man is wise, he will not only listen to you when you rebuke him; he actually will love you when you come to him with the truth of God’s Word to show him where he is wrong. That is how you know that grace is at work in his heart.

**Now 3<sup>rd</sup> – We want to conclude by thinking of how it is is better to be patient in spirit in relation to both giving rebuke and taking rebuke.** (Verses 8 and 9)

“The end of a thing is better than its beginning; the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.” “Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools.” The person who gives a righteous rebuke should know then, that it may not be received by the person who is being given the rebuke as something to help them. It may seem to them as something very unkind and hurtful. A verse that may be of help, both to those giving and to those receiving a righteous rebuke, is found in Proverbs 27: 5. “Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed.” You can say that you love a person, but if their soul is in danger, is it really love not to say anything to them about their sin? Is real love something that is to be carefully concealed? No, turn with me to Leviticus 19: 17. “You shall not hate your brother in your heart.” “You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him.” So we see here, that it is hating your neighbor if you do not rebuke him. Therefore, let us love our neighbor as ourselves. And let us be patient in our spirit whether we are the one giving the rebuke, or the one being rebuked. Let us not hasten in our spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools.

Let us close this study by going to one more passage of Scripture which will help us in both giving and taking rebuke. Psalm 141, verse 3 – “Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.” “Do not incline my heart to any evil thing, to practice wicked works with men who work iniquity; and do not let me eat of their delicacies.” “Let the righteous strike me; it shall be a kindness.” “And let him rebuke me; it shall be as excellent oil; let my head not refuse it.” Notice on the one hand, that the Psalmist is praying that the Lord would help him to keep watch over what he says with his mouth. He does not want to say anything that would dishonor God or be hurtful to others. And notice also, that the Psalmist prays that he would be rebuked by a righteous man because it shall be as an excellent oil.

This reminds me of the parable of the Good Samaritan told by Jesus in Luke 10: 25-37. The parable is about a man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.” A priest went by without helping, and then a Levite as well, but then a Samaritan came by and helped the wounded man. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal and took care of him. This is the kind of help that we sometimes need in regard to our sins. They have taken us down, but our kind-hearted neighbor, or brother, will help us up. The difference between the parable and our text is that the man in the parable was not in a position to ask for help, whereas we if we are wise, we will ask in our spirit – “Let him rebuke me.” May your heart be that tender; that this is what you will pray and ask for, from God, for yourself.