

Message #22**Ecclesiastes 7:1-8**

If I could sum up in one word the Solomonic key to a meaningful or meaningless life, it would be the word “choices.”

In fact, the word “better than” (min) which shows up seven times in these 8 verses (**7: 1-twice, 2, 5, 8-twice**) is a comparative that reflects a superiority that is chosen out to be imminent or above other things (Gesenius, p. 484).

THE MEANINGFUL BETTER LIFE IS ATTAINED BY MAKING RIGHT CHOICES, BUT THE BEST CHOICES WE NEED TO MAKE ARE NOT THE BEST ONES WE TYPICALLY WILL MAKE.

Now the context of this discussion is after a tremendous discussion of the sovereignty of God. God is sovereign, we are not. We don’t even know what is good for us (6:12). God sovereignly permits us to experience things in life for our own good. If left to ourselves, we do not see the good in what God is permitting.

CHOICE #1 – The superiority of a good name. **7:1a**

Now to the Jewish mind and to the mind of God, a good name was something of extremely high value. A good name is the same as a good reputation or character (Prov. 22:1). A name was “no mere label” in Solomon’s day, but was intended to express an underlying nature.

Now good ointment in Solomon’s day, like ours, was expensive. What Solomon is actually saying here is that a good character that is internal is far more valuable than a good perfume that is external.

CHOICE #2 – The superiority of death. **7:1b**

Now there is a strong grammatical connection “and” that connects this thought with the preceding thought. The day of one’s death is better than one’s birth because at one’s death the good character is seen in the sight of God. A good character will be rewarded.

When you think about it, if one has a good name in the sight of God, the day of one’s death is better than the day of one’s birth. When a person is born, he/she has all of life before him and he will make sinful choices and there is no guarantee one will wind up with a good character. But if, at the end of life one has a good name, from God’s perspective he is much better off.

CHOICE #3 – The superiority of the funeral. **7:2**

Because the wise person who is right with God reflects on his own relationship with God and the temporality of his own life. A funeral has a much more eternal effect on someone than an eternal house of feasting.

CHOICE #4 – The superiority of sorrow. 7:3-4

Even though we don't like it at the time, sorrow is much better than laughter. Situations of sorrow potentially can have a great purifying effect because they may lead one to repentance and great spiritual depth (Heb. 12:11).

Reason #1 - Because laughter does not automatically mean happiness. 7:3b

Truth is a person could be grinning from ear to ear and be miserably depressed. On the other hand, a person could have a sad face but have a happy heart knowing he is right with God and doing the will of God.

Just because a person is laughing externally does not mean he is happy internally.

Reason #2 - Because wise people focus their minds on the eternal. 7:4a

The wise person realizes that times of mourning are valuable because those times cause the wise person to reflect on the eternal. Sorrowful times cause wise people to think about God, about the brevity of life and about eternity. Times of mourning cause a wise person to take a serious look at himself and his own spirituality.

Reason #3 - Because fools focus their minds on the temporal. 7:4b

God classifies a pleasure-seeker as a fool. There is nothing wrong with pleasure, there is nothing wrong with enjoying life as long as God is in the center of it; but a fool does not fear God and is out for pleasure. For the fool, pleasure becomes the basis for most of his decisions. If it will make him feel better, he will do it.

CHOICE #5 – The superiority of rebuke. 7:5-7

I find this interesting, because there are some people who actually will not go to church services because it rebukes them. Paul predicted this would happen as we near the end (II Tim. 4:3). The Bible is not given to tickle ears; it is given to cut open souls.

Reason #1 - Because laughter is short-lived. 7:6

This imagery means laughter burns out quickly and makes a little noise, but there is no lasting simmering fire. It is all empty.

Reason #2 - Because fools do not lead to Godliness. 7:7

People may wind up oppressing us because God smites us for following their foolish, pleasure-seeking path (Deut. 28:33-34, 27).

Fools don't shoot straight. They make you feel good and that ultimately drives a wise man mad. They wind up in charge. People who play games and try and manipulate and bribe lead one to corruption. Fools are greedy for gain, but not wise people (Prov. 15:27).

CHOICE #6 – The superiority of the end. **7:7**

When you think about it, the end of a matter is better than the beginning. That is true of all sorrowful things.

CHOICE #7 – The superiority of patience. **7:8b**

It is far better to patiently wait on God than to proudly and arrogantly develop a spirit against God. Proverbs 14:29 says, “He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered exalts folly.”

No matter what you are experiencing right now, two things are certain:

- 1) God is in sovereign control of it all.
- 2) God is doing what is best for you, for all things work together for good to those who love God.