

## Ecclesiastes 7: Living Life Backwards

### Summary of the Preacher's Main Points So Far:

1. **The Whole of Life is *vanity* – a mere breath in which none of our personal accomplishments or legacies will survive or be remembered** (Ecclesiastes 1).
2. **Even those specific things that are precious to us, that we hold onto so tightly and invest so much in, also have little or no lasting satisfaction** (Ecclesiastes 2).
3. **Life is not about struggling to gain; but rather letting go, and learning to simply receive and enjoy life as a gift -- accepting this is the beginning of true Joy, Hope, and Freedom** (Ecclesiastes 3).
4. **A) Making life about “ME” is the source of most pain.**  
**B) Making life about others -- you will find true joy and contentment that cannot be matched elsewhere under the sun** (Ecclesiastes 4).
5. **Religion, like any other pursuit, is vanity if approached for personal gain, rather than as a platform for giving** (Ecclesiastes 5).
6. **Don't try to control your life, or you will suffer the tragedy of never finding contentment** (Ecclesiastes 6).

The Preacher has been teaching that I must accept that the circumstances of my life are outside of my control. “I cannot straighten what is crooked” or fix what is broken. In light of this fundamental truth of “life under the sun,” in **Ecclesiastes 7** the Preacher offers two more truths to enable us to live the way God meant for us to live:

1. **Let Death Be Your Teacher and Learn to Live Life Backwards**
2. **Choose Wisdom Over Escapism; But Know That Even Wisdom Is Limited**

### Death & Living Life Backwards

- “Death is an Evangelist”
- He is a friend that offers us a way to live life backwards with the limitations and boundaries of life in full view – helping us to live with more fulfillment, joy, and peace.
- If we welcome him and his counsel, we will find life.
- If we try to escape him, we will lose even what we have.

**Imagine Yourself at a funeral/memorial service. The preacher is saying that there are two types of people there in the audience: (1) the fool, who is uncomfortable, and looks forward to the service to end, so he can get back to “living”; and (2) the wise man who realizes – “one day that will be me” – and he hears Death say, “come in and stay awhile. Have a seat and listen to me.”**

## Ecclesiastes 7:1-6

## Death's Message?

A good name is better than a good ointment,  
And the day of *one's* death is better than the day of one's birth.

<sup>2</sup> It is better to go to a house of mourning  
Than to go to a house of feasting,  
Because that is the end of every man,  
And the living takes *it* to heart.

<sup>3</sup> Sorrow is better than laughter,  
For when a face is sad a heart may be happy.

<sup>4</sup> The mind of the wise is in the house of mourning,  
While the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure.

<sup>5</sup> It is better to listen to the rebuke of a wise man  
Than for one to listen to the song of fools.

<sup>6</sup> For as the crackling of thorn bushes under a pot,  
So is the laughter of the fool;  
And this too is futility.

## Wisdom Has Its Advantages, But It Too, Is Limited

The Preacher believes that Wisdom is far superior to Escapism and Fantasy. But he comes to the conclusion and accepts that there are loose ends...Even Wisdom, in "life of under the sun," God limits (2:13-17; 3:9-11).

### Ecclesiastes 7:7-10

### Escapisms & Fantasy

For oppression makes a wise man mad,  
And a bribe corrupts the heart.

Money

<sup>8</sup> The end of a matter is better than its beginning;  
Patience of spirit is better than haughtiness of spirit.

Impatience

<sup>9</sup> Do not be eager in your heart to be angry,  
For anger resides in the bosom of fools.

Anger

<sup>10</sup> Do not say, "Why is it that the former days were better than these?"  
For it is not from wisdom that you ask about this.

Nostalgia

*When you experience nostalgia, your heart is longing for a more beautiful person than you have ever met or a more beautiful place than you have ever known. You think you're longing for the past, but the past was never as good as your mind is telling you it was. And... God is giving you in that moment one of the most profound glimpses of the intensity of perfection and beauty that you have actually yet to see. What is in fact pulling on your heartstrings is the future: it's heaven; it's your sense of home and belonging that has just cracked the surface of your life, for just a moment, and then is gone.*

– David Gibson

<sup>11</sup> Wisdom along with an inheritance is good  
And an advantage to those who see the sun.

<sup>12</sup> For wisdom is protection *just as* money is protection,  
But the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the lives of its possessors.

**Still Wisdom, as good as it is, can never give you the control and the destiny you are so tempted to live for...**

<sup>13</sup> Consider the work of God,  
For who is able to straighten what He has bent?

<sup>14</sup> In the day of prosperity be happy,  
But in the day of adversity consider —  
God has made the one as well as the other  
So that man will not discover anything *that will be* after him.

<sup>15</sup> I have seen everything during my lifetime of futility; there is a righteous man who perishes in his righteousness and there is a wicked man who prolongs *his life* in his wickedness. <sup>16</sup> Do not be excessively righteous and do not be overly wise. Why should you ruin yourself? <sup>17</sup> Do not be excessively wicked and do not be a fool. Why should you die before your time? <sup>18</sup> It is good that you grasp one thing and also not let go of the other; for the one who fears God comes forth with both of them.

<sup>19</sup> Wisdom strengthens a wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city. <sup>20</sup> Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who *continually* does good and who never sins. <sup>21</sup> Also, do not take seriously all words which are spoken, so that you will not hear your servant cursing you. <sup>22</sup> For you also have realized that you likewise have many times cursed others.

<sup>23</sup> I tested all this with wisdom, *and* I said, "I will be wise," but it was far from me. <sup>24</sup> What has been is remote and exceedingly mysterious. Who can discover it? <sup>25</sup> I directed my mind to know, to investigate and to seek wisdom and an explanation, and to know the evil of folly and the foolishness of madness. <sup>26</sup> And I discovered more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are chains. One who is pleasing to God will escape from her, but the sinner will be captured by her.

<sup>27</sup> "Behold, I have discovered this," says the Preacher, "*adding* one thing to another to find an explanation, <sup>28</sup> which I am still seeking but have not found. I have found one man among a thousand, but I have not found a woman among all these. <sup>29</sup> Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices."