

Ecclesiastes 7:7-12 –The Better Desires - 2

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Solomon displayed his God-given wisdom not only in his judgments as king and military leader, but also in his writings. For example, you would have noticed how he pointed out that **many of the pleasures of this life (but not all) were properly enjoyed, but they do not satisfy the soul**. That is why he called them vanities. Wives were good, construction projects were good, knowledge was good, wine was good, music was good, but none of these things satisfied the needs of the soul. **So in his God-given wisdom, 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 should desire now that he has a satisfied soul**.

We looked at 2 of those desirable things before and today we will look at 3 more of those things that a soul-satisfied covenant child should desire...things that are better than wives, wine, poetry, music, and great construction projects.

Our headings are: **Avoid Oppressing**, **Learn patience**, and **Have A Wise Administration of Wealth**.

Our goals are: **That, based on the promises of Christ and your duty to him, you will endeavor to acquire and use these gifts so men will praise Christ**.

Avoid Oppressing

7 Surely oppression destroys a wise man's reason, And a bribe debases the heart.

1. A man could be wise and yet and yet fall into sin – even oppressing others. And when he starts to oppress others he loses reason. Oppression is self-feeding. It is like an addictive drug. You start it and you can't stop. And so the oppressor squeezes the weak...just as one would squeeze an orange for juice.
 - a. He might squeeze the poor under the cover of free-market wisdom and capitalism and say: I didn't force him to work for a low wage. He agreed to it. And the more money he makes, the more he squeezes his worker...much like Solomon himself did. He made virtual slaves of some of his fellow Jews.
 - b. Or one may have wisdom and want to help the poor, but end up following communism and say: You have too much. (To justify socialism, President Obama misused the Scriptures, quoting: "To whom much is given much is expected." We have to take some of what the rich have and share with those who have less. Either way, it is oppression.
 - c. Sometimes the foolish man tries to oppress others by squeezing out their voice...denying them an opportunity to speak and an opportunity to be heard. He does this so he can get more power.
 - d. Also, he may demand bribes, but soon realizes that all he could earn with bribes in this life is money. And he often finds out that the Lord might let him put money in his pocket and put holes in his pockets also so that the more he fills them up, the more falls out.

2. Why must a wise man avoid oppression and the taking of bribes?

- a. He avoids oppressing others and taking bribes because he knows that oppression makes him a monster and destroys his reason. He loses rational thinking and resorts to any method to meet his desires. God's sure judgment is then in his future of the oppressor.
- b. He avoids oppressing others and taking bribes because the Lord told him to wait for prosperity. The wise man knows that God raises anyone up and blesses him when God is good and ready...and then no one can stop the one whom God raises up.
- c. He avoids oppressing others because he knows that God not only ordains the goals, but he ordains the means of getting to those goals. So the wise man uses right methods - hard work- in order to get rich. It is true that some godly are tempted to resort to corrupt methods to get rich when they see, for instance, corrupt and wicked men prospering...like Asaph...and the godly are struggling to survive.

Psalm 73:2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped.³ For I was envious 羡慕 of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked.¹² Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase in riches.¹³ Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence.¹⁴ For all day long I have been plagued 折磨, And chastened every morning.

But your duty before God is to always do what is good...and never oppress others in order to succeed in life. Be patient and wait for the Lord's work and he will bless you at the right time.

Have Patience

8 The end of a thing is better than its beginning; The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.⁹ Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, For anger rests in the bosom of fools.

1. The wise man is patient in poverty and doesn't complain but waits for God's reward – even in heaven, if not on earth. He is not angry that the wicked prosper financially on earth. He knows his future is bright. This is why Solomon said: The "end of a thing is better than its beginning." God will reward the good man for his patience, so the wise man does not feel he has lost the race if he doesn't get everything he wants today! He can wait for his reward for patience.

2. Consider God's repeated call to be patient, and not be angry...

Proverbs 16:32 *He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.*

Ephesians 4:26 "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath,

3. What are those rewards that God promised in the Scriptures for patience with your neighbor? (You see, God doesn't just demand that you obey (and he has that right to demand obedience as your Creator and Re-creator) but he even rewards those who desire to obey or work at learning to obey.) What rewards does God promise to those who endure troubles in this life – hardships of every sort: poverty, perils, sickness...unfair divorce...loss of loved ones through death? Consider the parable how Lazarus was rewarded in heaven because he endured the troubles of his life – filled with sores and begging for the scraps 残羹剩饭 from the rich man's table for food.

Luke 16:25 "But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.

And for those with persecution, perils, etc., consider the Lord's call to be patient.

Matthew 10:22 "And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved.

Jesus knew the challenges that waited for his church after he returned to heaven and he wanted to urge them to wait for their coming reward. He didn't say: Name and claim it!

10 Do not say, "Why were the former days better than these?" For you do not inquire wisely concerning this.

4. The wise man is always looking ahead for the glorious spreading of God's kingdom. You've heard enough preaching about that from Revelation. Yet, it is common today to say that the past is better than today. Many spend much time showing how it was better in the past. You hear phrases like: The good old days. We had more fun long ago. The good times are over for good. I had a better life when I was young. The food was better in the 1950's. Children were more obedient when I was growing up." But thinking and complaining that the past was always better could be an attack against the Lord. How? In condemning the present you might be blaming God for present circumstances, or you might be thinking that somehow God has abandoned his people.

5. So instead of complaining about the present, your best course of action

a. Know God's promises, and wait patiently on the Lord to work out his promises over time.

b. Examine your own life and see if you have failed to properly serve God in the present and hindering 阻碍 your present blessings.

c. Remember that God is always good to his children throughout all ages.

Have A Wise Administration of Wealth

11 Wisdom is good with an inheritance, And profitable to those who see the sun.

1. The wise man wants wisdom so that he can use it to maximize the benefits of all the gifts Christ gives to him. That is what Solomon asked for and got. And that desire for wisdom is most needed in the way he spends his money. But keep in mind that this was teaching of using wisdom with all the other gifts God gives to you...not just for money. Because wealth is so highly prized, it is used to represent other gifts.

2. How specifically does wisdom benefit a man with an inheritance or with his hard earned money?

a. He shows the world that he will use what Christ has given to him according to Christ's rule. This is

therefore exemplary 可仿效的.

- b. He uses his money wisely for the good and future of his children. He leaves a godly heritage.
- c. He uses his money wisely for the good of Christ's church. This is evangelistic and kingdom building.
- d. He uses his money wisely for to help those who are poor and truly needy. He is compassion.

12 For wisdom is a defense as money is a defense, But the excellence of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it.

3. The man who has money and wisdom to use money well will protect himself and others from trouble... His family and friends won't have to sit in the rain...they won't have to starve...they won't have to be cold...Pastors won't have to find secular work. And what he does not have to use will be well preserved.

Proverbs 18:11 The rich man's wealth is his strong city, And like a high wall in his own esteem.

And wisdom stops a man from being controlled by money.

1 Timothy 6:10 For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness 贪欲, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

4. And I have no doubt that Solomon was pointing to that ultimate Wisdom that gave life – even the Lord Jesus Christ – whom Solomon called “Wisdom” in Proverbs. Through your knowledge of Christ and by grabbing on to Jesus Christ you get the ultimate protection of all.

Proverbs 3:18 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who retain 记住 her.

Wisdom, Jesus, was pictured as a “tree of life.” This is the same expression that Jesus used of himself (dying on a green tree) and which John used of Jesus in Revelation. The argument is like this: Wisdom gives life. Jesus gives life. Jesus is wisdom.

John 17:3 "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

2 Peter 1:3 as His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain to* 属于 life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,

Conclusion:

It is easy to want to oppress people. Left to your natural self you will not mind squeezing others so you can move ahead. But you do not have to follow that way. Why? The Lord will bless you if you are faithful. Consider Ps 84:11 “For the LORD God is a sun and shield; The LORD will give grace and glory; No good *thing* will He withhold From those who walk uprightly.” This means you will always get from the Lord what is good for you. At the same time, remember that you are only able to stop oppressing others because you have been freed from your oppression... freed by the Lord Jesus Christ. Because you have been freed from such great bondage, you are able to respond with kindness.

Second, wait for the Lord's timing. Don't try to move-up God's timetable, or you will sin against him. You already have the down-payment of reward in your heart. You believe and the Holy Spirit convinces you that you are the child of God through Christ. Be patient and wait for the smaller blessings now because you have the guarantee of the fullness of blessings in heaven.

Third, use what God has given to you wisely...whether you get it by inheritance (someone else's hard work) or your own hard work. Why? Everything you have belongs to the Lord. He is your Creator. More than that, the Lord is your Re-creator in Jesus Christ. You belong to him body and soul. So don't hoard 囤积...don't waste his gifts...be generous...tithe...save for the future...share...

Finally, no one can obey God unless his heart is changed. And the heart is changed only when one sees his sin and looks to the Lord Jesus Christ who obeyed and suffered for all those who believe. Do you recognize the work of Jesus for you?