

**July 13**

**Scriptures:** Read Ecclesiastes 7, 8 & 9

**Key Verse:** "... I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him." (Ecclesiastes 8:12)

## **Overview**

In this latter half of the Book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon gives practical advice for living. In chapter seven, Solomon, the preacher, relates the "better" things in life. His point in the first verse is that the good name (honour) of a person is brought out at his death; therefore, in his day of death, everyone knows that he has made something out of his life, but at the time of his birth this was unknown.

The preacher continues to express, through contrasts, that man should take life seriously, especially in light of its brevity, which should cause man to see the need for wise living and heeding the reproof of the wise. Therefore, to go to a house of mourning is better than a house of feasting, where frivolity causes one to take a light attitude toward life. The laughter of fools is empty (vanity) for it does not come from a strong source within, like the burning of thorns under a pot; it makes a lot of noise, as if something is happening, but in actuality the fire is weak and short-lived (7:6).

The wise person is described as one who is patient, calm, and content in his present circumstances. But pride, haughtiness, anger, a hot temper, and discontent expressed in a longing for the past, belongs to fools (7:8-10). The wise person is far better off, especially if, along with his wisdom, he also has money; both are called a "defense", but wisdom is better, since it can give life. As Solomon stressed in the book of Proverbs and reaffirms here, true wisdom is to fear the Lord (7:18), and only He, the Lord Jesus, can give us life and that more abundantly. The preacher is urging submission to the will of God which is wise, especially in light of the limitation of man's knowledge, for only God knows what the future has in store for each person.

Solomon warns against hypocritical righteousness, against being very wise in one's own eyes (Prov. 26:12), which will lead to self-destruction. He also warns against the extremes of wickedness and foolishness, which will lead to an early death. One must do all things in moderation and humbly resign to fear the Lord (which is true wisdom) and thus escape the penalties that come from these extremes. Wisdom from God gives man great strength (7:19), which is essential because of the universal sinfulness of mankind (7:20, 29). Mankind's fallen and depraved nature is what the Preacher claims to have discovered from his diligent search for wisdom (7:23-29).

Solomon confesses that a truly wise man is very rare, and that the wise man will be one who is loyal and obedient to the king on the basis of his oath to God. The instruction that man should obey civil authority has been ordained by God, and the New Testament bears witness to this. A man can be quite certain that obedience brings safety from the threat of a king's punishment, but even the wisest of men cannot be certain nor control the time of their death (8:1-8; 9:2-3, 12); this is only in the hands of God.

Solomon is certain, however, that although the righteous may suffer and the wicked prosper, in the end, it will go well for only those who fear the Lord (8:12). Mankind will never be able to fully understand the ways of God (8:17), so Solomon resolves that in the meantime there is hope while one is yet alive. The best thing to do is enjoy what you have (including the wife of your youth, 9:9), while God gives you life. Solomon instructs that whatever you do, you should do with all your might, which is pleasing to God. Even though you may not have the best ability, God can give you success in that which you do with all your might (8:15; 9:4, 7-8,9-11).

## **Prayer**

We give You praise, oh God, for the clear instructions Your Word provides for wisdom and success in all areas of life. Help us to be not only hearers but doers of Your Word.