

**Ecclesiastes 7: 1 ; “A Good Name is Better”, A Bible Study**  
**prepared for those gathered at the Rendall home**  
**for prayer on September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2010.**

Here in Chapter 7 Solomon has turned a corner in his investigation of his experience of this life under the sun. He now begins to speak in a more declarative way as a Preacher. God had given him time, and strength, and riches, and wisdom to be able to investigate these matters, but there came a time when he knew that conclusions must be drawn from his investigation so that he and all those whom he preached to would find what is better than vanity. As I look about me, I think that I see many people living their life only for this life and not for the next life. That is vanity. People are more pre-occupied with getting everything they can out of their experience of this present life, and in doing so, they seem to think that they can drift unconcerned into the next life with no consequences to themselves as to who and what they lived for, in living their life here upon the earth. They forget that God is a righteous judge. They do not see the connection between how they have lived this life, with how they can anticipate living the next. But the next life is infinitely more significant to your experience, even though this present life is no less important. That is what these verses are telling us. Both experience in this life, and experience in the next are important because they are integrally related. You must draw right conclusions from your experience in this life if you would be happy in the next. You, as Solomon, must attempt to understand what is “better” for you in this life, so that you will be eternally happy when you leave this world and go into the next life. The moment that you die you will understand these things perfectly, but your eternal state will be fixed forever, and it will be too late to change anything. Therefore it is imperative that you be wise in the here and now of this life. Solomon now declares to us the remedy which will keep us from living a vain life by giving us many comparisons in the first 8 verses of this chapter. We will look at the first 2 comparisons which are found in the 1<sup>st</sup> verse. 1<sup>st</sup> – A good name is better than precious ointment. And 2<sup>nd</sup>- The day of death is better than the day of one’s birth. These comparisons are given to us in the form of proverbs which have the second phrase building upon or amplifying the truth of what the first phrase has declared. Let us ask ourselves this evening whether we have this very precious thing – a good name.

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – Solomon tells us that a good name is better than precious ointment.**

What is better than the most precious and delightful earthly balm or scent, he says here, is having a good name. This “having a good name” is not only having a good name in the sight of men, but it is speaking first of all with reference to having a good name in the sight of God. For what good will it do you, in the end, to have a good name in the sight of men, if God is not pleased with you? He is

your judge; He is your law-giver; He is your King. It is to Him that you will give an account. To have a good name is something that we must choose. You can see this if you will turn over to Proverbs 22: 1. "A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather silver and gold." The word "good" is not found in the original, either in this text or in the one that we are studying. It is supplied. But there is a reason for its being supplied. We know from many other portions of Scripture that it is not just any name that should be chosen, but a good one will find favor with God and with all good men and women everywhere. But the choice that must be made is between that which is passing, and is related to this passing life only; and that which is eternal and comes from God alone. That is the choice that every person must make. Great riches cannot give you or show you love and favor and bless you by their presence with you. Only God can. And this is something that is not learned except by the teaching of grace which comes through a deliberate seeking of God in accordance with His revealed Word. Ask yourself tonight whether you have deliberately chosen to seek and to pursue a good name in the sight of God rather than pursuing the passing pleasures of sin and what money can buy in relation to those pleasures?

Now where does the strength come to make this kind of choice? Well it comes from beholding the name of Jesus Christ as a more precious ointment than the the precious ointments of this life. His name "Messiah" signifies the anointed one. His name is a precious ointment to heal and strengthen and to enable those trusting in Him, to do His will and to seek to have a good name in God's sight. It is because He was good in everything that He said and did that we trust in Him and look to Him for the grace to have a good name ourselves. Look over a few pages to Song of Solomon Chapter 1, verse 1 – "The Song of songs which is Solomon's." "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—For your love is better than wine." "Because of the fragrance of your good ointments, Your name is ointment poured forth; therefore the virgins love you." This book is also written by Solomon and it speaks in picture language of the relationship between Christ (the heavenly Bridegroom-King) and His bride (the Church). It speaks prophetically, and it speaks personally, to every believer. Every believer who has tasted of His love and grace can say with all confidence and sincerity that His love and His grace are better than all earthly joys and treasures put together. His name is ointment poured forth. In other words, when you call upon His name, you find a balm for your soul, and grace is poured out into your sin-wounded, sin-wearied heart. You find these wounds healed and that burden lifted, and you find life and strength and joy that allows you to deliberately choose and reject the world's pleasures and approval so that you might pursue having a good name in the sight of God and good men. To prove this to you, turn with me to Hebrews Chapter 11, verse 24. "By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than

the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.” “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.” This is very interesting language is it not? The use of the words, “choosing to suffer affliction”, and this being spoken of as coming about by his “esteeming the reproach of Christ” as greater riches than the treasures of Egypt? A good name is better than a precious ointment.” Precious ointment in the world is highly valued and highly esteemed. “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches.” This is exactly what Moses did. He deliberately chose Christ and the precious ointment of the grace of God, so that he could “suffer affliction with the people of God, and thus have a good name in the sight of God. He did not have a good name in the sight of Pharaoh. He had never heard the name of Jesus Christ, but the name of God revealed to Him. And he was enabled to do it by faith – “seeing Him who was invisible.” A good name in the sight of God begins by believing in His name, and calling upon His name. A good name in the sight of God continues and is established forever by living by faith in His name. Look at Proverbs Chapter 10, verse 7 – “The memory of the righteous is blessed, but the name of the wicked will rot.” God will see to it that the memory of good men shall last and last. They are in His mind forever. They shall be remembered forever. Think about the way that Barnabas is described in Acts Chapter 11, verse 22 and following. Then the news of these things (that is a great number of the Hellenist Jews being converted to Christ) came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch.” “When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.” “For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith.” There is an example of a good name. Now look at Psalm 112, verse 5. “A good man deals graciously and lends; He will guide his affairs with discretion.” “Surely he will never be shaken; the righteous will be in everlasting remembrance.” Will you not remember this dear believer? Every person who is truly good is good by the virtue of Christ’s grace, and calling upon His good name; that person knows the reality of pursuing a good name through doing good works in the name of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit; God will remember their forever name and He will establish it forever. This leads us to our next point.

**2<sup>ndly</sup> – Solomon tells us that the day of death is better than the day of one’s birth.**

“And the day of death (is better) than the day of one’s birth.” Since we normally think of death as a sad time for ourselves and others, these words may seem very strange to us. There is a reason why the day of death is better if one knows God and the meaning of life. The word, “and”, show us that there is a connecting link between these two phrases. The implication is, that if a person has a good name, he has nothing to fear when he dies. The day of death will mean that all of that person’s trials and difficulties will be over, and something far better is coming for them. That person will be rewarded for all the good that they have

done. Turn with me to Revelation Chapter 14, and verse 13. “Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, ‘Write: ‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’” “Yes,” says the Spirit, “that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them.” A good man’s legacy is a beautiful thing. When he dies, his works follow him on to his eternal reward. He able to rest from all of his labors, and all the good that He does for the cause of God and Christ; all the good that he has done for others shall not only be remembered; it will be amply rewarded. This is why the day of death is better than the day of one’s birth. A person will have a good name when he does good works; those good works which are commanded in the word of God. And they will have a good name and a reward in heaven when they are doing these good works out of a love for what the Lord Jesus has done for them. Look at Matthew Chapter 5, verse 14. “You are the light of the world.” “A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.” “Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.” “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Do your works so that the light of God’s word is shining through you. Do your good works, not just so that you will be seen, but so that men will praise God and glorify God because of what you have done for them because you love God, and you think deeply about how you can truly help other people. Remember that ultimately your good works are seen as good by God because they have been done in the name of Jesus, and thus covered by his blood, so that none of the imperfections will be brought up or remembered in the day when you meet God. John Chapter 3, verse 21 says, “But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.

That is the conclusion that Solomon is leading us to; that all of our works which we do to get for ourselves a good name would be done “in God”. If Solomon were living in the New Testament era as we are, he would says this. If you have believed in Jesus Christ and you have lived for God’s glory in accordance with the words of the Bible, then the day of your death will be better than the day of your birth. If you have not, it would have been better for you that you had never been born. That is what Jesus said about Judas. But I want to close this message tonight by showing you an example of a person who came to have a good name because she loved the Lord Jesus. She came to know the reality of a good name being better than a precious ointment. Turn with me to Matthew Chapter 26, verse 6. “And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil (precious ointment), and she poured it on His head as He sat at the table.” “But when His disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, ‘Why this waste?’” “For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to the poor.” “But when Jesus was aware of it, He said to them, ‘Why do you trouble the woman?’” “For she has done a good work for Me.” “For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for

My burial.” “Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.” Here is a woman who was remembered by God, and our Lord Jesus, as one who did a good work for Him out of love for Him. Jesus knew that the day of His death would be better than the day of His birth because all of our redemption would be accomplished on that day, and He would begin to see the reward of all of His labors. His good name would be established as the name above every name forever. “Why this waste” turned out to be a good deed done for our Savior which will always be remembered. Her name, which isn’t even mentioned in the text here in Matthew 26, will be remembered forever through what she did. It will be remembered by Jesus because he knew that she was pouring this ointment out in preparation for His burial. She did not hesitate at the cost. She knew that His good name was better than precious oil. She knew by faith that the day of His death would be better than the day of His birth, because she believed that everything that He did was good. And this is how she came to do this good work. And I am saying that our motivation should be the same. Our good name is more precious than anything that we might own or possess or delight in. But we cannot secure a good name for ourselves in God’s sight except we pour out our most precious resources in service to Him in good works. Then we shall understand the reality of what a good name is worth, because we will know what it cost the Lord Jesus, and we will know what it has cost us. But when we do this, we will also come to know the reality of the day of our death being better than the day of our birth.