



Ecclesiastes 6-7

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Tape #7236
By Chuck Smith

Turn now to the book of Ecclesiastes beginning tonight with chapter six.

There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, and it is common among men: A man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honour, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity [an emptiness] and it is an evil disease (6:1-2).

That a man should have wealth and power and everything he wants and yet lacks the capacity to enjoy it, to partake of it. Solomon said it is something he observed as not a rarity but a rather common thing.

I was interested in some of the remarks of Donald Trump as he spoke really of the excitement being in the pursuit but there was disappointment in the attainment, that once it was attained he was bored with it. It was just the excitement of the chase. Solomon pretty much came to that same conclusion too. There is the excitement of the chase but there is an unfulfillment in the accomplishment. A person has a lot but yet doesn't have the capacity to fully enjoy it, "It's an evil," Solomon said.

He really passes his inheritance onto strangers yet a stranger eats it. That is he really has no natural children to pass it on to and it becomes the inheritance of strangers. Remember Abraham was a very wealthy man, God had blessed Abraham. Prior to the birth of his sons he was complaining because his only heir was his servant Eleazar. All of the great wealth would pass onto a stranger, that is someone who is not begotten by me.

If a man beget an hundred children, (6:3).

I don't know how many children Solomon had; no doubt he had a lot. If you've got seven hundred wives, you are bound to have a lot of kids. His son Rehoboam had eighty-eight children, that's a pretty good number of kids to have around the house. There is another king that is mentioned in the Bible, Ahab; he had even more than Rehoboam. For the wealthy kings they of course had their harems so they had a lot of children.

If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many, and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; (6:3).

He's sort of forgotten in death.

I say, that an untimely birth is better than he (6:3).

That is a child that is stillborn is better off than a man who has a hundred kids and lives many years but his soul isn't filled with good.

For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness. Moreover he hath not seen the sun, nor known any thing: this hath more rest than the other (6:4-5).

He's talking about a child that is born dead, "comes in with vanity, and departs in darkness" (6:4). He will go nameless because they don't name the child. However he has not seen the sun, he has not known anything, but he has more rest than the man who lives a long life with a hundred kids. I can imagine so.

Yea, though he live a thousand years twice told, (6:6).

You live to be two thousand years old.

yet hath he seen no good: do not all go to one place? (6:6).

All of us go to the grave.

All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled (6:7).

We work to satisfy our own desires. All of the labour a person puts in is to accomplish and fulfill goals and desires; I want and therefore I work. I think Harry used to have a bumper sticker, “I owe, I owe, so off to work I go”. We have our wants and we labour to satisfy our desire for things. Yet the appetite is never satisfied.

Have you ever noticed how that again I want that new car? I go down and price it out and I really can’t quite afford it but the guy is pressuring me and he gets with some kind of financing, creative financing and you start to think, “If I cut off on this and get an extra job then I can afford to get it”. So you sign up and here you are driving this fancy car and it’s great. For how long? No matter how fancy a car is, five years from now you’re going to be tired of it, you’ll be looking for something else.

All the man’s labour is for his appetite and yet he is never filled. Jesus said to the woman of Samaria, “You drink of this water and you are going to thirst again”. I think that we would be wise if we would write that over every earthly goal that we have. We are never filled. All of our labour goes to our appetite but we are never filled.

For what hath the wise more than the fool? what hath the poor, that knoweth to walk before the living? Better is the sight of the eyes than the wandering of desire: (6:8-9).

To have something, there is a proverb that sort of goes with this, “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush”. “Better is the sight of the eye” something that you actually have is better “than the wandering of the desire” (6:9).

this is also vanity [the wandering of desire] and vexation of spirit [frustration]. That which hath been is named already, and it is known that it is man: neither may he contend with him that is mightier than he (6:9-10).

He speaks about the frailty of man, how that we often find ourselves in that uncomfortable decision in seeking to contend with God. There’s a scripture in Isaiah that says, “Woe unto him who strives with his maker”. A lot of people find themselves sort of striving with God. I think that all of us at one time or another in our lifetime find ourselves at odds with God, striving with God. Couple of things that I might note about a person who strives with God. Number one, how can you hope to win striving to with him that is mightier than he, contending with him? Secondly, if you do win, you’ve really lost. If you strive with God and you prevail then you have really lost because God’s way is the best thing that could ever happen to you.

Our striving with God comes from our limited understanding as he points out in verse twelve “For who knoweth what is good for man in this life,” you think you know what’s good for you but as he says, “who could tell what is going to be after him?” (6:12). You don’t know the future, you don’t know what the future holds. So we find ourselves striving with God because we really have in our mind our ideas of what is best for me. I truly don’t know what is best for me. I contend with God because things are happening and I think, “This is horrible. Lord, why would you allow this to happen to me?” and I contend with God because I cannot see and I do not know the purposes of God because I don’t know what the future holds.

In the early years of my ministry I found myself striving with God so much. My wife and I were talking the other day about being poor. We said we were always broke but we were never poor. Poor is a state of mind I think. We didn’t have any money to speak of. We got fifteen dollars a week from the church and I decided to be a George Mueller and live on faith and trusting God to supply the needs of my wife and I. There was just the two of us at the time. God was faithful, he came through. We didn’t go without a single meal, now we came close. The faith was tested but usually the post office came through.

We had a post office box there in Prescott Arizona and twice a day they would deliver the mail and usually in the afternoon we got the mail from out of town and they dropped it in the boxes at two thirty in the afternoon. So Kay and I would walk a block over to the post office in the afternoon and when we needed money for dinner we would just get the letter that was there, that we knew would be there, and it had five or ten dollars in it. We would go out and get dinner. We got to where we sort of depended on that because fifteen dollars didn't go very far.

So this one-day we were broke, didn't have any money for dinner and we went over to the post office and we waited as the fellow was dropping the mail. We got there just a little early and he hadn't quite got to our box. We watched the mail through the little glass coming into the box coming right down into ours. Then we saw him go right past ours; he didn't put anything in it. Kay said, "Honey he probably has it in his packet there, he just missed it. He's gotta have something for us. Go over to the window and call for him and see if he just didn't miss us". So I went over and said, "Sir, you didn't put anything in our box" and he said, "I don't have anything for you this afternoon Mr. Smith" and Kay said, "Ask him if he's sure" I said, "Are you sure?" He went through the stack he had there and said, "Nope nothing for you today, sorry". Kay said, "What are we going to do?" and I said, "Well, we'll go back to the apartment and we'll see just how much we do have for dinner". And we went through her purses, my coat pockets and the dresser drawers and we came up with thirty-seven cents for dinner.

We headed for the market with thirty-seven cents and accepting the challenge of wondering how nutritious of a dinner can you get for thirty-seven cents. It was a real challenge. We got a couple of carrots, a can of Van Kamps pork and beans which at that time was only sixteen cents, (number two size can), and I forget what else, some green vegetable so we'd have our protein. We went up to the counter and the guy totaled it up and said, "thirty-seven cents". I laid it all out. We were rather proud of ourselves, it's going to be nutritious and by tomorrow afternoon the post office will come through and we'll be able to eat regularly again.

As we headed for the door, the fellow called us and said, "Hey kids, come back here a minute" and said "There's something I've been intending to do for the longest time and I just keep forgetting". He reached under the counter and pulled out a gift certificate for ten dollars and handed it to us. So I said to Kay, "Let's go over to the meat case". We had T-bone steak that night. We figured as long as the Lord's treating, we might as well eat T-bone.

He was teaching us. I was complaining, it's hard to be broke. I couldn't get things for my car that my car needed. I needed an air cleaner for my car, there were dusty roads in Prescott and couldn't get an air cleaner. I didn't have the money for it. Boy that's a real luxury isn't it? That just didn't fit in the budget. So actually, I ruined the engine on my car sucking in that Arizona dust, it really just wiped out the engine. Tough days, important days. Days in which I was contending with him who was mightier than I over the lot, over the difficulties that we were going through. The days in which I was learning to trust in God, learning the faithfulness of God, learning that God would not fail. They were so important for what God had in mind for the future. You see, I didn't know what the future held. Who knows what's going to come? God knows.

Most the time our contention with God comes over the fact that we don't know what is really good for us and we don't know what's going to take place in the future. So we find ourselves contending with God over the circumstances that we don't fully understand.

Seeing there be many things that increase vanity, what is man the better? For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a shadow? (6:11-12).

We know that life is short, measured by days. If you don't know that yet, you'll know it when you get old. The older you get the quicker things go by and the shorter life seems. When I was a kid it seemed like life was forever and now I look back and say, "Man it went fast".

for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun? (6:12).

Watch it when you are contending with God.

A GOOD name is better than precious ointment; (7:1).

Now precious ointment was a very important thing in that eastern culture. The woman came to the house where Jesus was eating dinner and she was anointing his feet with precious ointment. Judas Iscariot said, "Why this waste? This could have been sold for a lot of money and we could have put it in the treasury and given it to the poor people". In Jesus Christ Superstar they made Judas a big hero over this statement. That's because they didn't read the whole scripture. The scripture goes on to tell us Judas said this no because he was really interested in the poor but he was the one who was keeping the purse for the group and he had been thieving out of the purse. Jesus Christ Superstar didn't tell you that about Judas. Try to make a hero out of Judas and Jesus being very cold and callous towards people's needs, excepted the extravagance but Judas, the hero, objected to this extravagance.

It is so important to have a good name. We don't stress the importance with kids anymore, the importance of a good reputation.

and the day of death [is better] than the day of one's birth (7:1).

Interesting observation from an old man who is jaded.

It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart (7:2).

That is going to the house of mourning for one who has died. The day of the death being better than the day of ones birth; better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting. They always had a feast at the birth of a child.

for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart. Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better (7:2-3).

We had just dealt with "who knows what is good for a man in this life?" Is it better to have sorrow or laughter, we would all say laughing is better than mourning. Here he says, "sorrow is better than laughter" (7:3) for he speaks about the depth of character that comes out of suffering.

The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but in the house of fools is in the house of mirth [merriment]. It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools (7:4-5).

Faithful are the wounds of the friend.

For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fool: this also is vanity [emptiness] (7:6).

In the Hebrew there is a play on words and you can't appreciate it in English. The word is Serum and Sear. The crackling of thorns is the thorns are Serum and under the pot is Sear. It is a play on words. If we would put it in English and give a play on words you'd probably say the crackling of nettles under the kettles. You get the idea of the play on words.

In that area they didn't have much wood and they would make their fire out of sticks and thorny bushes and so forth and grasses. They would flame up quickly but they would burn out very soon. They weren't a good lasting fire. So the crackling of the thorns is when you've got a fire and you are using just kindling and small twigs the fire comes quickly and is hot, but it goes out so quickly too. He talks about how the laughter of fools is just as empty as the crackling of the thorns under the pot.

Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad; and a gift destroyeth the heart (7:7).

To see oppression is really disturbing for a wise person to see. We see it so often in the news. We see people who are being oppressed and it almost drives you crazy. In fact, my wife is so sensitive that if she

sees a report you know they're going to tell of this child in the next segment that was kidnapped or abused or whatever, she quickly turns the TV because she can't stand to see it. It so upsets her; it makes her almost crazy to see someone who is being oppressed, a child that can't defend itself. She empathizes so deeply for the situation.

"A gift destroys the heart" (7:7); the gift would be a gift of bribery. It destroys your true judgement.

Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: (7:8).

That's not according to Trump. The end of it is empty but the beginning, the chase, is exciting.

and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit (7:8).

Just waiting for the Lord to do it. Waiting on him.

Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: (7:9).

Don't be quick tempered.

for anger resteth in the bosom of fools. Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? (7:9-10).

You always hear about the "good old days" don't you? I can remember when I was a kid, California was different. I can remember Orange County when we first moved down here. This is great, orange groves all over the place. The place smelled like incense. The orange blossoms, May around here, just the sent of orange blossoms filled the area. It's glorious. When we lived in Huntington Beach, there were only six thousand people living there. When we surfed at the pier there were only three of us down there, three of us guys used to go down in the morning, and we were the only ones there. We'd pick either the north or south side, which ever was breaking best, and had it all to ourselves. I don't even try to go anymore. There are too many people on the waves and there is all kinds of anger and bitterness, "get off my wave". These kids think that an old bald headed man has no place out there anyhow. Leave it to them.

We are always referring to the "good old days" and he's sort of coming out against that because every age has its advantages and opportunities. Now I can remember, back in the good old days, when I was a kid and my dad had to crank the car. I'll tell you, having a starter, just push a button or turn your key, is just a lot better than that. There are advantages to every age in which a person lives. I think so many times our memories of the past are sort of, the psychologists talk about an asceama, that is, this is the way you remember it with certain facts and then your mind makes up the rest. There is fantasy mixed in with the facts. They call it asceama, this is the way you recall it to be, you remember it to be, but it is part fact and part fiction. It comes into the thing where the guy says, "I'm not the man I used to be, the truth is I never was". When you think, you sort of glorify the past. There's a warning against that.

Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this. Wisdom is good with an inheritance: and by it there is profit to them that see the sun. For wisdom is a defense and money is a defense: but the excellency of knowledge is, that wisdom giveth life to them that have it (7:10-12).

Wisdom, it's good. Better if you have money with an inheritance. It's a defense to you and the excellency of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those that have it.

Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked? (7:13).

This is speaking a little bit about the sovereignty of God. God has ordained my life, who can change that which God has ordained? You can go off on that side to a position of the absolute sovereignty of God, which is the denial of the responsibility of man which is not good. Yet there is that truth to the sovereignty of God. "Who can say to the potter, Why has thou made me thus?"

In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: [stop to think] God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him (7:14).

So God brings joy into your life and God brings adversity. They work together in creating what you are.

All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man the prolongeth his life in his wickedness (7:15).

So I don't understand this, he is saying. He sees just people who die young and sees wicked people who live to be old. Our minds say that if you live a right kind of a life you should live to be old and prosperous and happy, if you live a wicked life you have to be cut off early. Yet he observes that that isn't always the case. There are times that the righteous are cut off early and the wicked live for a long time.

Remember now Solomon, in his later years, he got away from the Lord. His many wives caused him to turn away from God. He was building these temples to the different gods in order to appease his wives. So this is sort of his conclusion but not necessarily a wise conclusion.

Be not righteous over much; (7:16).

Or do not be overly righteous.

neither make thyself over wise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time? (7:16-17).

Don't be too righteous or too wicked, just take a little bit from both sides. That's not really the thrust of the New Testament which is that of commitment completely to God and to the will of Jesus Christ.

It is good that thou shouldest take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thine hand: for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all (7:18).

The main thing that he saying is just have a fear or reverence for God.

Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city (7:19).

Wisdom will do more for you in defending you than ten strong men.

For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not (7:20).

"There is none righteous, no not one." There is not one of us who has not sinned. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." What does that mean? That means that all of us needs Jesus Christ to cleanse us from our sins, to bring us into a relationship with God. The effect of sin is always that of alienation from God. Sin separates you from God.

From the beginning, when God spoke to Adam and Eve in the garden, he said, "You can freely eat of all the trees except the tree in the middle of the garden. You are not to eat of that and they day you eat of it you will surly die" spiritual death. Spiritual death is the separation of your consciousness from God. The day you eat of it you are going to die spiritually, you are going to be separated from God consciously. "So Eve ate and she gave to Adam and he also did eat". What was the affect? Separation from God. When God came into the garden, God said, "Adam where are thou" where are you Adam, "we've hid ourselves" the separation from God. That is always the affect of sin.

God created you that you might have fellowship with God and because that was the purpose of God creating you; your life can only have a sense of fulfillment and purpose when you are living in fellowship with God. That is the real problem with the world today. Men are trying to find meaning and purpose in life in things achievements, material possessions and like Donald Trump they find they are empty once they have them. They are not satisfying because God did not create you to find satisfaction in material things or in personal achievement. God created you that you might fellowship with him and inasmuch as that is the basic purpose of your existence until you are living in fellowship with God, you are not answering to the

very purpose of your being alive. That is why so many people find life is so empty and meaningless. You see them in this mad pursuit from one thing to another, trying to find something that will satisfy, something that will fulfill that craving that they have within.

The problem is that sin has separated them from God and separated from God, life is empty and meaningless and you can go on forever arguing what is the purpose of mans existence. You will find that there is no real purpose for mans existence apart from his fellowshiping with God. The Greek philosophers wrestle with the purpose of mans existence and it was just a play on words. They would go from one thing to another. The real purpose of mans existence is fellowship with God, that's why you were created. That is basic, it's innate, it's just a part of your existence that you cannot escape. Sin separates you from that fellowship with God. And all has sinned, "there is not a just man on the earth that does good and has not sinned" (7:20).

God, in seeking to restore man to fellowship with himself, sent his only begotten son Jesus Christ, who bore our sins for us. That is as Isaiah said, "All of us like sheep went a stray. We turned everyone of us to our own ways but God laid on him the iniquities of us all". God place all of the guilt, collectively, of man kind and placed it on his son Jesus Christ who in turn excepted the result or penalty of that sin which was separation from God. Remember on the cross, his cry, "My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me"? When the collective sin of the world was placed upon Jesus Christ, he experienced the affect of sin, which is separation from God. He cried out "agony, why have you forsaken me?" That cry was a quotation of Psalm twenty-two where it was spoken prophetically, "My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me? Why are you so far from my roaring? I cry in the day time and thou hearest not and in the night season, and am not silent" (Psalm 22:1-2). But then he tells the reason. "For thou art holy, you who inhabits the praises of your people" (Psalm 22:3). So because of the absolute holiness of God there can be no fellowship between an absolutely holy pure God with unrighteousness or sin. They are incongruent.

When Jesus bore your sin he also bore the penalty of your sin, that separation from God. The Bible tells us by our believing in Jesus, excepting the fact that he bore our sins, he has provided for God a just bases to exercise his mercy towards you in forgiving you of your sins. In the forgiving of your sins, that which separated you from God is now removed so that you can have fellowship with God. So John, when he wrote his epistle said, "These things we write unto you that you might have fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ", and he said, "If we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship with each other as the blood of Jesus Christ is cleansing us from all sin".

If we say we have fellowship with God and walk in darkness then we are just lying, we don't really know the truth. There are a lot of people today who claim to have fellowship with God but they don't know what it is about, they are walking in darkness. Walking in Christ, believing in Jesus Christ, there is that forgiveness of my sin which then opens the door for fellowship with God, oneness, communion, Koinonia, with God the Father. That's why you were created. That's why the Christian life is such a satisfying life, such a rich full life and such an overflowing life. A life that as John said, "These things we write unto you that your joy may be full". How is your joy full? When you are fellowshiping with God you experience the fullness of joy because now you are responding to the very purpose of your existence as you are living in this relationship with God, in his close communion and his fellowship with man.

Also take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee:
(7:21).

Don't listen to everything. Don't be an ease dropper is basically what he is saying, you are liable to hear someone curse you. Don't try to be listening to everything that is being said because you might not like what you hear.

For oftentimes also thine own heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others (7:22).

You know that, you know that you have been angry and you've said things. Don't take heed to all of the things that are spoken.

All this have I proved by wisdom; I said, I will be wise; but it was far from me. That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out? (7:23-24).

We often times are guessing at reasons and purposes, but who really knows.

I applied mine heart to know and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of folly, even of foolishness and madness: And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: [a trap] whosopleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken [trapped] by her. Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account: Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; (7:25-27).

You are looking for really a good man, honest and upright. He says he has found one among a thousand. That's not a very good percentage.

but a woman among all those have I not found (7:27).

Now you have to realize that having a thousand wives there was no doubt all kinds of problems, jealousies, rivalries, I don't envy him at all, his position. It was an unscriptural thing to begin with. The Bible said, "when you have kings, they are not to multiply wives lest they will turn their hearts away from the Lord" and that's exactly what Solomon's wives did, they turned his heart away from the Lord. The Bible warned about that but Solomon did not take the warning from the Bible and he did that which was foolish. As a result, he had a very jaded attitude towards women. Had he taken just one wife, he probably would have found one among a thousand. Having a thousand created too many problems.

Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought our many inventions (7:29).

Man schemes and devises. He made us upright but we turned to scheming and to devising to get our will done or to accomplish our purposes.

Next week we'll start with chapter eight and nine and maybe take ten, we'll see how far we get.

I think that the real lessons for us tonight are commitment of ourselves to God and to the circumstances God brings into our lives, knowing that God loves us and God knows what is best for us, recognizing with our limited foresight, we don't know what is best for ourselves. We don't know what the future holds. God, knowing what the future holds and God knowing what is best for me, I should not be arguing with God over those things which he has brought into my life but I should be seeking to discover the will and the purpose of God for these things in my life.

To fight with God will make you a bitter person. Many people have become bitter against God because they did not understand the purpose that God was seeking to work out. God has a plan for you and God is working out a plan in your life if you have surrendered your life to him. The true rest is in commitment. "Lord I don't know but I just commit myself to you." I'm not demanding that God do certain things, I'm just committed. "Lord, whatever you know is best, you do that." It's an extremely important lesson; that of complete commitment of yourself to God, the accepting of things that God brings into your life, not contending with the one who is mightier than you but recognizing your limitations and limited understanding, submitting your way to him.

Then I think it is so very important that knowing that I have sinned and that sin alienates me from God and knowing that my life will only be fulfilled, as I live in fellowship with God, the most important thing is that I seek to live in harmony with God in fellowship with God, being one with him. By receiving the forgiveness of my sins through Jesus Christ only then can I live a fully satisfying life. All of man's labour

goes to his appetite yet he is never filled. You'll never find satisfaction in the world in worldly things, in material things. You'll never find full satisfaction until you're living in fellowship with God. Important to know.

May the Lord be with you and may you experience the joy and the fullness of joy that comes by living in close relationship and fellowship with God. May He minister to you in a very special way this week. May you feel the closeness of God. May you be guided by God. May you be strengthened in that hour of trial or temptation and may you see the victory of Christ being worked out in your life and to submit yourself to Him. May it be a wonderful week and joyful blessings fellowshiping with our Creator. In Jesus name.