

# “Road Signs to Life!”

## Ecclesiastes 7

**Intro.** – Ecclesiastes is a book designed by God to help you/me stay off *dead-end streets*. I’ve chosen the 7th chapter to develop today. This chapter has been wrongly interpreted. 2 examples will show what I mean:

1) vv 16-17 speaks of not being “over righteous” and “over wicked”. Some interpret this to mean being lukewarm – neither cold nor hot! But didn’t our Lord condemn such a mindset in Revelation 3:15-16 when speaking to the church at Laodicea “*I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.*”

2) v 28 Solomon’s comment that he could not find one good woman in a thousand has been taken as the worst kind of chauvinism. Yet, a close look at the text makes clear this is hardly the intended meaning.

What is intended are directions. Pain, sorrow, and the perplexities of life cannot be ignored. We’re dying men/women in a world of decay. This depressing fact is countered by the divine truth: choose the path of God’s wisdom, rather than dead-end streets of human design, life will have meaning/purpose and ultimate success.

In this chapter, Solomon under the inspiration of God lists “road signs” (preferred choices) we need to make. These signs deal with pressing matters such as: What kind of prompting/motivation are we using? From whom or what do we seek directions? What choices are we making?

*Purpose: to better understand the importance behind making good choices*

Stewart Rodgers (friend of Nichols family) use to say quite often: “I want to leave my kids one thing: the ability to make wise choices.” Such will only take place when God’s road-signs are heeded:

### **I CHOOSE TO BE SERIOUS** (vv 1-4)

- here “the preacher” urges us to not trifle with life – not saying don’t enjoy life... just don’t trifle with it

#### **A. Death is Better Than Birth**

1. Not saying birth of a baby is to be thought of as tragedy and funeral considered good fortune...
2. Is saying that funerals/death can be a valuable means of learning some valuable lessons.
3. When a loved one dies, more inclined to proper spiritual reflections:
  - a. Illus. – stand along a casket as mourners &/or friends = ought be powerful reflecting time
  - b. yes, at the “house of mourning” (funerals) some valuable lessons ought to be learned...

#### **B. Sorrow is Better Than Laughter**

2. At the banquet table (party) by stark contrast, the atmosphere is light and serious topics are deliberately avoided and forgotten...
3. Christians on the other hand, are not afraid to face realities of life... i.e. they are enabled to see matters in proper perspective:
  - e.g. sickness and death is a reality... parties of the world are anything but...

#### **C. Heart of the Wise**

1. In the “house of mourning” Christians are accepting the inevitability of death and are enabled to be spiritually prepared...
2. In the “house of pleasure” disillusioned people seek irresponsibly to escape the seriousness and the reality of life.
  - Illus. – by those who habitually avoid nursing homes, funerals, hospitals, worship assemblies all in an effort to sidestep decisions that need to be made.
4. God teaches valuable lessons in the “house of mourning.” The choice is ours – we can walk frivolously on dead-end streets or follow the road signs God has given!

### **II PRIZE A REBUKE** (vv 5-7)

- it is better to accept a valid word of correction than to be mesmerized by mindless praises from world:

A. A Wise Man's Rebuke

1. Who likes a reprimand? Who likes to be corrected or told they are in the wrong?... but necessary!
2. There is a tendency to gather, congregate or associate with those who do not remind us of our sins... "Birds of a feather flock together" mentality...

B. Song of Fools

1. Text describes the laughter of fools like that of crackling thorns – Illus. – Palestine burned dried thorn bushes for quick/small amounts of heat = quick fix...
2. The merriment of the world gives but temporary relief at best, but a godly rebuke more valuable!
3. It's our choice: learn from legitimate/godly criticism or follow the song of the Pied Piper down an empty "dead-end street" the street of empty/hollow "fun."

**III BE PATIENT AND NOT ANGRY** (vv 8-9)

A. Patience is Better Than Pride

1. In the pressure of the moment, often lose our long range goals = wrong anger always results in regrettable actions...
2. Illus. – ever go on a trip, wanting everything to go smoothly, but inevitably something happens...

B. Anger Resides in the Lap of Fools

1. How foolish to become angry when something goes wrong or amiss...
2. Text makes clear, anger will result in the imitation of a fool... patience results Godliness!

**IV CHOOSE NOT TO COMPLAIN** (vv 10-14)

A. Living in the Past (v 10)

1. Some Christians are bright/happy/cooperative, as long as, things go their way – when they don't complaints abound...
2. It is tempting in challenging circumstances to think of "the good ole' days" and find nothing in the present worth hoping in and for...
3. Yearning for the "good ole days" is not realistic – God hasn't changed... His purposes will be accomplished WITH or WITHOUT US!
4. Need to choose NOT to whine and complain... instead, need to be confident that God's purposes are being worked out even as we speak!

B. Trust the Wisdom of God (vv 11-14)

1. Be confident God's plan will be accomplished
2. Good and difficult times are permitted by God for your and my eternal welfare...
3. Ultimate triumph is assured – such enables Christian to be content in all circumstances...

**V DON'T OVERREACT** (vv 15-17)

- how do you react to injustices experienced in life? Solomon reveal the right way and 2 ways avoid:

A. Two Wrong Ways (unlike great controversy concerning TP – over or under?)

1. Self-righteousness (salvation by works)
  - a. some conclude if one goes to an early grave must be result of God's punishing...set about to *gain* or *earn* the favor of God = works righteousness (legalism)...
  - b. examples of this would be Pharisees and lost son who stayed home...
2. Lustful/riotous living
  - a. what was meant by "don't be over wicked"
  - b. simply another peril of self-righteousness – when seeing righteous suffer one chooses the road of unrestrained wickedness.

B. One Right Way

- "the wisdom of God" = the rest of the chapter deals with finding/using the wisdom of God!

**Conclusion:** Never a day passes without each of us being confronted with the responsibility of making better choices. A purposeful/successful life is conditioned upon a growing relationship with God. This is precisely why God through Solomon gave us these five road signs:

- 1) We must choose to be serious – to be helpful to others rather than shallow and frivolous...
- 2) We must prize a rebuke – if deserved (man-up)... not like world who seeks to escape reality through entertainment and things...
- 3) We must be patient and not angry – trusting and waiting in the Lord not giving into ungodly angry...
- 4) We must choose not to complain – walking in the submission and obedience to the Lord...
- 5) We must not overreact to injustices of this life...