

## Take This To Heart ...

**Ecclesiastes 7:1 - 2 (NKJV) *A good name is better than precious ointment, And the day of death than the day of one's birth;<sup>2</sup> Better to go to the house of mourning Than to go to the house of feasting, For that is the end of all men; And the living will take it to heart.***

The preacher in the passage cited above is using a proved effective method of teaching, that of contrasting for the purpose of encouraging the proper course in life. The word “better” is a comparative of “good”. It is used to reveal something or someone of greater excellence, advantage, usefulness, etc. Therefore, we must not understand the Holy Spirit to be condemning without limitation the appreciation and enjoyment of life and its many attendant blessings. Surely not, for prior to this the preacher had written, “*As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor—this is the gift of God.<sup>20</sup> For he will not dwell unduly on the days of his life, because God keeps him busy with the joy of his heart.*” (Eccl. 5:19-20)

**It is good and right for the Christian to be happy in Christ.** Paul wrote, “*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*” (Phil. 4:4) He told those at Thessalonica to “*Rejoice always,*” (1 Thess. 5:16) Furthermore, we have instruction regarding the merit of sharing in the vicissitudes of this life. “*Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.*” (Rom. 12:15)

Why then is the day of death “better” than the day of birth, and going to a house of mourning “better” than going to a house of feasting? The answer may be found by considering the text further. **This life is not all there is!** Death is the destiny of every man. We the living, should **take this to heart.** All of us must meet our destiny or appointment. (Heb. 9:27) Knowledge of this inevitability should not destroy our ability for contentment, joy and a productive utilization of the blessings of this present life. However, we should be cognizant continually of the end of all flesh. Such reflection will be good for us, if we are instructed with God's Truth. Remember that Paul told Titus, “*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men,<sup>12</sup> **teaching** us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should **live** soberly, righteously, and godly **in the present age,*** (Titus 2:11-12)

In view of the certainty of death and the reliableness of instruction and the efficacy of the redemptive offering, then, “*Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.<sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.<sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.<sup>32</sup> And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.*” (Eph.

4:29-32) Surely as we **take to heart** the common plight of all, we will be impressed with the need to serve God truly by helping our fellow man, the living, to prepare for the day of death. This will not be our accomplishment if we feel as do many whose only hope is “**under the sun**”, that we may gain the heights by stepping on the backs of others for whom Christ died.

The brevity of life is a subject of emphasis in Bible teaching. Let us not waste our lives with self pity and provoked egos, nor with faultfinding obsessions. Do not oppress. Do not tear down that which is right and good in another. It will not strengthen us to magnify the weakness of others. God’s Way is to upbuild and be upbuilt, to edify and be edified, to help and be helped. You are going to die. I am going to die. All others are going to die. Let us “**take this to heart**” and gain a “**good name**” that it may be “**better**”. God loves and cares for us all. I submit that “**take this to heart**”, means think about it, meditate on it, until we can appreciate it.

**CAB**