

**Ecclesiastes 6:10-7:14**  
**January 12, 2022**

**II. Human Effort (1:2-6:9)**

**III. Human Limits (6:10-12:8)**

**A. No One Knows What Is Good (6:10-7:14)**

With our passage today, we begin the second half of Ecclesiastes. In the first half, Solomon examined and answer the question *What profit is there?* (1:3). Now the question at the forefront is *Who knows what is good for man in life?* (6:11-12). We quickly find the answer is that no one knows what is good for man in life, because we are too limited in our perspective!

It begins with the understanding that God is sovereign over all, and His ways aren't always made known to us (6:10). As God has *already named* us, which speaks to His omnipotence and omniscience over us (cf. Ps 147:4; Isa 40:26; 43:1).

This begins what seems like a series of proverbs, but all of them are connected by the Hebrew word *tov*, which means *good*. It also appears in the phrase *better than* (6:12; 7:1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 10, 11, 14). Solomon is going to begin to tell us what is good, yet... they might not always be satisfying answers! Perhaps figuring out what is good is going to be just as elusive!

In beginning to answer the question as to *what is good for man in life*, Solomon writes that *a good name is better than precious ointment* (7:1). Here, the idea of a *name* should be understood as one's *reputation*. Having a clear name is better than many riches!

In vv. 2-4, mourning is contrasted with rejoicing, and Solomon drives home the point that, when faced with the option to focus on life or death, death is the preferable option. When we come face to face with our mortality, it shapes the way we view life. Think of the way people shift their priorities if they are told they

only have three months to live! We should live every day as if it might be our last. Douglas Miller writes in his commentary:

*By thinking upon death, one is motivated to appreciate the joys that help one celebrate life while one has it.*

Just as we should focus on our mortality to help us live wisely, so also we should welcome correction (vv. 5-6). Usually, we seek to minimize or avoid correction; however, the Word of God says the correction from the godly is a good thing. Only fools will tell you what you want to hear, and it's *vanity* (v. 6).

Continuing on this theme, Solomon returns to the idea of *the end of a thing is better than its beginning* (v. 8). We also have a rebuke against those who wistfully long for the good ol' days in v. 10: *Do not say "Why were the former days better than these?" For you do not inquire wisely concerning this.* We can't go back to what was; we can only deal with our present circumstances.

The *good* in vv. 11-12 is once again *wisdom*, and it's *good* like *an inheritance*. But, unlike money, *the excellence of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it.*

Solomon closes this section in vv. 13-14, at which point he bookends the passage with v. 1, with two mentions of both *day* and *good*. Like we did in 6:10, we're also called to *consider the work of God*. Yet the tension here is that *God has appointed both the day of prosperity and the day of adversity.*

Trying to figure out what's coming next, or assuming that God is going to work one way or another, is vanity! We ought to trust Him, knowing *that all things work together for good to those who love God* (Rom 8:28), regardless of what that looks like!