

To DEATH AND BEYOND!, ECCL.7

Something Worth Living For #6

◆**Intro:** You know people everywhere have flaws, right? Even in the Church. Here are some actual Bulletin bloopers that prove it, taken from church bulletins around the country.

- [[Don't let worry kill you -- let the church help.
- Ladies, Don't forget the rummage sale. It's a chance to get rid of those things not worth keeping around the house. Don't forget your husbands.
- Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our community. Smile at someone who is hard to love. Say "Hell" to someone who doesn't care much about you.]]
- Irving Benson and Jessie Carter were married on Oct. 24th in the church. So ends a friendship that began in their school days.
- Potluck supper Sun. at 5:00 PM- Prayer and medication to follow.
- Ladies Bible Study will be held Thur. morning at 10 AM. All ladies are invited to lunch in the Fellowship Hall after the B.S. is done.
- The ladies of the church have cast-off clothing of every kind. They can be seen in the church basement Saturday.

◆The Teacher tackles another set of concepts in search of something worth living for. In this chapter he ponders the twin topics of moral brokenness and physical death, but what he sees is foggy. As Mufasa said to Simba, he will have to “look haaa-der” to really see.

◆**1. Think about the Grave! But you'll have to look beyond it.**

◆Ok, where is this going? The first six verses center on death and mourning for the dead. The writer seems to think it's actually good for us. That maybe we ought to go to funerals whenever we

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have a chance. That we should ponder the fact that "Hey, I'm gonna croak here sometime." (cf v2) And hey, "pleasure"? That really does very little about that! (cf v4). What's he saying?

◆**A.** He's saying we only really gain when we go through some pain. CS Lewis says that God whispers to us in our pleasures; but he shouts to us in our pain. Here "death" is the ultimate example of pain or trouble. Death is the universal leveler of all people. [It's like a hospital gown. A hospital gown is a universal leveler of persons. You can be a senator, or a plumber but once you're at the hospital and you put one on, you're a thing. You have struck rock bottom. Just to prove it to you, they put the tie in the back where you can't tell how well you tied up. Ever see someone in a hospital gown walk assertively, confidently down a hall? Of course not, it's all shuffle and shifty eyes. You never appreciated a pair of jeans so much as after that!] That's what death does; it makes you look for, long for, appreciate life in a whole greater way.

◆ It seems all backward, doesn't it. Isn't it the good stuff that makes a life? No, not really? But I thought pleasure and the pursuit of happiness make a life. No, not really. The pursuit of happiness only arises from the lack of happiness. Nobody who is already happy has to go look for it. But people who hurt sure do! They're looking! Hurting people can't help but ask the deeper questions, wonder about value, meaning, eternity, life after death –we can't help but think about these in the face of death and disease. That's why it's actually to our *advantage* to pay attention

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to death. Pain arouses spiritual reflection. Spiritual reflection leads to meaning.

◆ You can lose yourself in Netflix every evening. Keep the rum & coke flowing. And you won't think about God. Go to lots of ball games and concerts. And you'll feel maaay-be a bit less pain. But, ... have a child die and the heart pants for a greater hope. Lose your job and you start to ponder your existence more than before. Break an ankle and you suddenly appreciate that fact that a human can run, or play frisbee.

◆ If you haven't already, you need to think about your death if you really want to live.

◆ **B.** Know what else arouses spiritual reflection? Ends! Turning points. Mile stones. Ends. (7-14) That's the next set of verses (v8).

◆ v7 You can start out a respectable, upstanding citizen, or mayor, or governor. But a bribe here, an indiscretion there and you have a Cuomo (gov of NY) story. How you end says the most about who you are. Pay attention to how this is going to turn out! That's what the Teacher is saying. Always ask, "But how will this turn out in the end?"

◆ So you're a male High School teacher, and you find the junior girls especially attractive. Or you find the secretarial help at the company office makes you feel all hot & bothered. And you start talking in low voices

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with one of them, even though you're married with two kids at home, but your wife doesn't wear the revealing outfits this gal wears to the office. And you start imagining things, and playing them out in your mind.

◆ But what if you asked, "How will this all end?" Go after it and it will break up your marriage. It will pretty much ruin your influence in the lives of your kids. You could even lose your job.

◆ What if we asked "How will this end?" before we took those pills? Are you under pressure to look the other way at work? Ask "How will this turn out in the end?" Do you want to buy that item just because other people have it? Ask "How will this all end?"

◆ Know what v9 is saying? "Don't be an impulse buyer! "Be a chess player when it comes to life. Always think a few moves closer to the end." Ends give you perspective.

◆ Now while this is all true, the sad part for our Teacher is that no matter how you live, everybody dies. And often no matter how you live, it can all end poorly. Which means for true worth, you'll need to live for something beyond death.

◆ Psalms 90:12 Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.

◆ *Psalms 39:4-5 Show me, O LORD, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life. You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my*

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years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath.

◆Pity the person who has nothing to live for beyond death. How sad for the atheist who believes we are a cosmic accident headed nowhere but for extinction. More on this later...

◆Our chapter moves to another similar investigation is search of what's worth living for.

◆**2. Think about Morality, but you'll have to look beyond your morality. (15-29).** Now the supposition is maybe being a good person is the ticket to meaning? Could that be it? Many people go here even if they are not religious. Let's just be good and make the world a little better while we're here.

◆Originally a Christian seminary, Harvard University has atheist as it's new chief chaplain. Greg Epstein, also the author of the book *Good Without God* writes "...May we encourage more hospital visits by the nonreligious, both literally and metaphorically. May we do more good work together and build something positive in this world—the only world we will ever have. May we focus more on the 'good' than on the 'without God.'" Epstein is confident that nonreligious people can "build something positive in this world" because of his "informed conviction that humanity has the ability to progress toward its highest ideals."

◆Have we? Trouble is, there's no universal consensus on what's making the world better. The Taliban think it makes the world

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better to decapitate Islamics turned Christian. Their culture thinks women should not learn, or even go out without the permission of a man. Their view of good is going door to door in Kabul shooting anyone with a Bible on their smart phone.

◆The Teacher laments (v15) human morality. The good doer still dies like the evil doer. And the cocky rapper who swears like a sailor in the name of art, and denigrates women as objects -he prospers, and maybe lives a long & large, strutting behind his sun glasses.

◆**A.** Still, thinking about virtue (right and wrong) also arouses spiritual reflection. Thinking about right and wrong, what should be and what should not be, -this is a universal phenomena. People of every culture on earth have a sense that some things are appropriate, and right, and some things are not. People of every culture experience guilt; feelings that they have done something "wrong". But why is that, if the evolutionist is right, and we are cosmic accidents, why do we feel guilt? Other animals kill their own, or eat their own, and don't brood about it. Why do we, if there is no meaning, truth, or a "way it's supposed to be?" Why do all our movies and novels imagine that say, cheating sexually with someone "else", is normal and fun, and yet nobody like being "cheated on"? If life is accidental, there is no explanation for the leap from matter to morality.

◆**B.** But lets just suppose we all opt for being virtuous and even agree as to what it is to be virtuous. (Example: stealing grapes is

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ok, stealing babies isn't.) There's a still a problem. Not one of us consistently does the virtuous thing even when we know what it is.

◆v20 *There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never sins.*

◆v28 *I found one [upright] man among a thousand, but not one [upright] woman among them all.*

◆To understand this you need to know he's a Jew talking to Jews. Jewish men had a daily prayer of thanks that went, "I thank you God, that I am not made a woman." Here the Hebrew writer is slamming Hebrew men. He's saying that in reality, men are no better than women! Lucky if you find 1 in 1000!

◆Compare this to the teaching of the prophet Isaiah.

◆How then can we be saved? All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; Isa 64:6-7

◆Compare this teaching with the Apostle Paul.

◆*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Rom.3:23*

◆*Do you want to have a meaningful life? It will require that you inquire as to what is virtuous, what is right for a human to be and do. But once you do, you are going to have to look beyond human morality, because no humans really have it!*

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◆V22: you know very well you do the things you dislike in others!

◆V23: it's beyond you to be wise and good.

◆**Conclusion:** Let's see if we can tie this together. 2) Nobody can really find the fulfilling life without caring about what is right and wrong. You have to pay attention to virtue. You've got to take a stand on right/wrong. You can't ignore or tolerate all things, or say, well, that's good for you, but not me. No, we have to find out truth. But when you do you also find that you don't have it all right. 1) Also, nobody can really find a fulfilling life without thinking about and dealing with the reality of death. It's actually to our advantage to face it. But then again, no matter how much we face it, we can't stop it. IS THERE A SOLUTION?!

◆I'm glad you asked. And the Teacher has left clues all along the path though he doesn't know how God will solve the human dilemma.

◆V13 Consider what God has done

◆V14 God controls the good and the bad

◆V29 God is the one who can make man upright.

◆He has my friends. He has. He sent Jesus our brother and our God. You see, morality and death are very much linked.

◆*The wages of sin is death. Romans 6:23*

◆Moral failure is why we die at all. But Jesus' death merits for you all Jesus' worth! He makes us righteous when we could never be right with God. Jesus' death takes yours. You will die and

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face judgement, and so will everyone else. But a lover of Jesus doesn't stay dead. And a follower of Jesus doesn't stay sinful!

◆ 2Co 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the **righteousness of God**.

◆ Romans 3:22-24 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

◆ *Romans 6:22-23 But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness (righteousness), and the result is eternal life(resurrection). For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

◆ By faith in Jesus, we get both righteousness (freedom from sin) and resurrection (life beyond death.)