

Intro.

- A. Choices are interesting, sometimes challenging, but none the less necessary.
1. On Mt. Carmel, Elijah instructed the prophets of Baal to **choose** 2 bulls for sacrifices (c. **1 Kgs. 18:23**)
 2. After David #’d Israel, (**1 Chr. 21:10**) his punishment involved choosing 1 of 3 punishments: 3-yr. famine, 3-mo. defeat by enemies, 3-da. to fall under the sword of the Lord (which eventually resulted in death of 70,000 Israelites).
 3. Of all Solomon might have asked of God, he **choose** wisdom (understanding heart) **1 Kgs. 3:9-14**
 4. Christ would refuse evil & **choose** good (c. **Isa. 7:15**)
- B. We will have countless choices to make in the new year.
1. We will have to choose between evil & good – activities, friends, etc.
 2. We will have to decide how we will use our time (c. **Eph. 5:17**) & money (c. **1 Cor. 4:2**)
 3. Sometimes have to decide between sleep, school responsibilities, & spiritual things! (c. **Mt. 6:33**)
- C. Solomon not only chose wisdom, He left us a record that directs us towards making the right choices.

Discuss.**I. A GOOD NAME IS BETTER THAN PRECIOUS OINTMENT. 7:1(a)**

- A. The value of a good name (reputation) cannot be overemphasized. *& in the church!*
1. A good name will open doors of opportunities in most any realm: *in school, work, financial institutions,* \
 2. When Alex. the Gt. confronted a coward in his army who was also named Alexander, he told him to change his name or change his behavior. Wearing the name of Christ, would He tell you the same?
 3. Poem: **Your Good Name** & **Prov. 22:1** *a good name is rather to be chosen than gt. riches...*
- B. Good name = valuable because
1. it must be earned, & can not be bought. **Ac. 4:36**
 2. it’s influence is far reaching (e.g., woman who anointed Christ w/ oil in the alabaster, **Mt. 26**; Barnabas\)
 3. Good name will out live the one it belongs to. (c. **Heb. 11**; **Rev. 14:13**)

II. THE DAY OF DEATH IS BETTER THAN THE DAY OF ONE’S BIRTH. 7:1(b)

- A. By design, this is true for children of God!
1. It is true of Christ. World celebrates His birth 1 day @ yr. Christian celebrate His death each Sunday!
 2. **Phil 1:21-23** As Paul lived *in Christ*, & saw death as gain, so he said *It is better to depart & be w/ Christ*
- B. Solon’s popular maxim: *No one can be called happy till he has crowned a prosperous life by a peaceful death.*
1. Job acknowledged the difficulties of life, **Job 14:1** *Man is born...is of few days & full of trouble.*
 2. John was Jesus’ penman in **Rev. 14:13** – (Those who die in Christ are blessed.)
 3. Psalmist proclaimed: *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints,* **Psa. 116:15**

III. GOING TO THE HOUSE OF MOURNING.....THAN TO THE HOUSE OF FEASTING. 7:2

- A. Mourning lost loved ones & visiting their graves were considered duties. **Jn.11:19, 31; Mt. 9:23**
1. Lessons that will endure are better learned at time of serious thinking as comp. to times of entertainment.
 2. In **Psa. 90:12** – *So teach us to # our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.*
- B. Consider some of the lessons learned at the house of mourning:
1. Physical life will not continue forever => **prepare, set priorities, live responsibly as stewards**
 2. Material possessions are vain (empty, worthless).
 3. Serious talk received by one with a heightened sensitivity about spiritual matters may provoke changes.
 4. Few things in life are more real & none more unchangeable than physical death. It is often a wakeup call

IV. SORROW IS BETTER THAN LAUGHTER. 7:3

- A. Joy & happiness is certainly at the heart of God’s children (**Phil. 4:4; Prov. 17:22** *a merry heart...*)
- B. Great lessons are learned at times of affliction.
1. *Before I was afflicted I went astray: byt now have I kept your word,* **Psa. 119:67 (& 71)**
 2. If we are never challenged, our potential strength will never be realized, c. **2 Cor. 12:9**

V. THE REBUKE OF THE WISE IS BETTER THAN THE SONG OF FOOLS. 7:5

- A. *Rebuke* is word for serious admonition that heals & strengthens though it wounds, **Prov. 13:1; 17:10**
1. Today, we might call it *tough love*.
 2. *Songs of fools* (i.e., flattery of fools), is degraded along with the *laughter & behavior of fools* (6-7)
- B. Words of praise are always my preference, but godly correction is vital, **2 Tim. 3:16f**
1. Solomon – *Do not reprove a scorner, lest he hate you; Rebuke a wise man & he will love you* **Pro.9:8**
 2. **Prov. 12:15** *The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but the righteous will come thru trouble.*
 3. **Prov. 27:6** *Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.*

VI. BETTER IS THE END...THAN THE BEGINNING. 7:8(a)

- A. Exceptions: evil projects (lust); good things not accomplished successfully; lives ending in disaster.
- B. This maxim is true -
1. *when*...Evil projects are defeated (liquor referendums), completion of appropriate tasks (Noah's ark).
 2. *because*...apprehensions are gone, work's accomplished & rest is sweet; sowing is rewarded in reaping

VII. THE PATIENT SPIRIT IS BETTER THAN THE PROUD HEART. 7:8(b)

- A. Consider reward of longsuffering (patient endurance). This = diff. in Jesus attitude & apostles, **Jn. 13!**
1. **1 Tim. 6:12** Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life,
 2. **2 Tim. 4:6-8** *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.*
- B. Pride often tries to get in our way while we are doing the Lord's work. ("P" = middle letter: *sin & pride*)
1. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble, **Jas 4:6. Vs. 10** *humble yourselves in sight of Lord, & He will lift you up!*
 2. **Rev. 2:10(b)** *those faithful until death will receive the crown of life* from Christ the Savior.

Concl.

- A. This year let's be careful & determined to Choose the *better things*.
1. Those are the things that are *worthwhile,...best...most advantageous*.
 2. Making the right choices requires us to seriously **THINK**
- B. Have you been thinking about some of those life-changing choices you need to make this year?
1. If you are ready to choose to let God control your life for the very 1st time, come
 - a. Believing
 - b. Repenting
 - c. Confessing
 - d. Ready to be Baptized & serve God faithfully
 2. If you need to come back to the Lord, and have made that determination, come confessing & we will pray for you.