

“Consider God”
Ecclesiastes 7:13-14
(Preached at Trinity, September 24, 2023)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. **Chapter 7** is a wisdom chapter. It sounds a lot like the Book of Proverbs.
Verses 1-4 are proverbs on the meaning of life and death and the importance of a good reputation.
Verses 5-6 describe the great contrast between a wise rebuke and foolish laughter.
Verses 7-10 describe wisely and patiently waiting upon God.
Verses 11-12 Solomon gives a brief summary on the value of wisdom. It serves to protect and preserve. Last week I introduced to topic and stressed how important it is for us to seek wisdom, to pray for it, to give ourselves to God's Word which is the chief source of wisdom.
2. True wisdom provides a right understanding of God's Word which enables us to rightly understand good and evil.
Wisdom helps us to rightly understand the world around us. Without spiritual wisdom and discernment we will not be able to rightly comprehend God's work and purpose upon the earth.
3. Sadly, few recognize the treasure of wisdom.
We read in Proverbs:
Proverbs 3:13-18 NAU - "How blessed is the man who finds wisdom And the man who gains understanding. ¹⁴ For her profit is better than the profit of silver And her gain better than fine gold. ¹⁵ She is more precious than jewels; And nothing you desire compares with her. ¹⁶ Long life is in her right hand; In her left hand are riches and honor. ¹⁷ Her ways are pleasant ways And all her paths are peace. ¹⁸ She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who hold her fast."
4. How few seek wisdom with as much energy and passion as they do material possessions.
Proverbs 1:7 NAU - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction."
Proverbs 4:7-8 NAU - "The beginning of wisdom *is*: Acquire wisdom; And with all your acquiring, get understanding. ⁸ "Prize her, and she will exalt you; She will honor you if you embrace her."
5. From **Verse 13** to the end of the chapter Solomon will make some practical application of wisdom as we journey through life.
Verses 13-14 put life in a proper perspective. These verses remind us of the sovereignty of God. The man or woman of wisdom is able to place everything under God's overarching rule. Solomon begins, "Consider God." That is the title I give to tonight's sermon.

- I. First of all, Solomon describes God's sovereignty as absolute and unchangeable.
 "Consider the work of God, For who is able to straighten what He has bent?"
- A. No part of creation is outside God's sovereign rule
 In Daniel 4:35 we read of God's all encompassing rule
 "he does according to his will in the host of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth"
1. "he does according to his will in the host of heaven,"
 The "host of heaven" refers to all of the heavenly beings. It literally refers to an army. God rules over all.
 - a. Satan gathered together 1/3 of the angels. It was an innumerable multitude.
 - b. At the birth of Christ we read,
Luke 2:13-14 KJV - "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."
 The word for "multitude" is πλῆθος from which we get our word plethora.
 - c. It must have been a great and mighty force, but they were as ants before the Most High God. They were all doing precisely what God decreed. God determines the actions and existence of every being in the heavens.
 2. Daniel then turns our eyes upon the earth
 "he does according to his will in the host of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth"
 1689 London Baptist Confession - **Chapter 5:1**
 "God the good Creator of all things, in his infinite power and wisdom, doth uphold, direct, dispose, and govern all creatures and things, from the greatest even to the least, by his most wise and holy providence, to the end for the which they were created, according unto his infallible foreknowledge, and the free and immutable counsel of his own will; to the praise of the glory of his wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy."
 3. All of nature has a certain defined order – we call it the laws of nature
 - a. There have always been four seasons: S, W, S, F
 - b. The moon has always orbited around the earth
 - c. A day has always been 24 hours
 - d. Gravity upon the earth remains consistent – things consistently weigh the same
 - e. Every animal behaves according to its God appointed nature
 4. We expect these things and assume them
 - a. Farmers know there will be springtime and harvest
 - b. Merchants know the weight of an object will be constant
 - c. Farmers know the various behaviors of their animals

5. Every action of every man is beneath the control of God – There is a divinely ordered lot for human beings.
Acts 17:28 – “In Him we live and move and have our being”
Daniel 5:21 NAU - "the Most High God is ruler over the realm of mankind and *that* He sets over it whomever He wishes."
 a. God determines when we will be born, where we will live, what we will do, and when we will die.
 b. God rules and overrules the hearts and minds of men.
Proverbs 19:21 – “*There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.*”

- B. What God decrees He accomplishes absolutely.
1. No one can change what God has determined
Ecclesiastes 7:13 NAU - "Consider the work of God, For who is able to straighten what He has bent?"
 2. No one has the right to question the sovereign will of God
Daniel 4:35 NAU - "But He does according to His will in the host of heaven And *among* the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand Or say to Him, "What have You done?"
Romans 9:20 NAU - "who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it?"
 3. It is the height of human arrogance to think they can instruct God.
 God asks Job:
Job 38:4 NAU - "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding,"
Job 40:2 NAU - "Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it."
 4. God has a perfect plan for each life. Shall we try to undo it?
Ecclesiastes 7:13 NAU - "For who is able to straighten what He has bent?"
 Everyone's life is a mixture of calm and turbulence. Of smooth and rough. Of straight and crooked.

II. Knowing God's all-encompassing dominion we must humble ourselves and submit to all His Providence. We must receive all of God's Providence with thanksgiving.

- A. We are surely happy at God's kind providences.
Ecclesiastes 7:14 NAU - "In the day of prosperity be happy,"
1. We enjoy countless blessings of God's grace
 2. We enjoy the rich bounty of God's provisions. 21st Century Americans enjoy blessings unknown by to previous generations.
 Abundance of food, medical advances, electricity, refrigeration, indoor plumbing, rapid transportation, internet (limitless exchange of information), cellphones, GPS
 3. God blesses us with families, husbands and wives, children.

4. The greatest of all blessings is God's redeeming grace delivering us from His condemnation.

Ephesians 1:3-4 KJV - "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ: ⁴ According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:"

- B. What about the frowning acts of providence?

1. There are many sorrows in this life?
Sickness and disease, hurricanes and floods, droughts and famine.
2. What about the difficult marriage or the wayward child?
3. What about the difficult boss? Or the dead-end job?
4. We all have degrees of bodily weakness, infirmities of the flesh. Some have poor eyesight or hearing. Some suffer with arthritis and pain in their joints, others with headaches, backaches, diabetes, irregular heartbeat. Leah had poor eyes, but Rachel was barren – these were crooked lots to bear.

- C. Solomon says we must be willing to receive all of God providence.

Ecclesiastes 7:14 NAU - "In the day of prosperity be happy, But in the day of adversity consider-- God has made the one as well as the other "

1. Most people receive the good things and complain about the bad.
2. We are seldom satisfied. We know little about contentment.

Ecclesiastes 6:3 NAU - "If a man fathers a hundred *children* and lives many years, however many they be, but his soul is not satisfied with good things"

3. God supernaturally fed Israel in the wilderness, but they eventually complained about the manna.

Numbers 11:5-6 NAU - "We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic, ⁶ but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all to look at except this manna."

4. We are charged to receive everything with thanksgiving.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 NAU - "in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

5. Thomas Boston wrote a book on this passage titled,
"The Crook in the Lot."¹

The NASB reads: **Ecclesiastes 7:13 NAU** - "who is able to straighten what He has bent?"

Who is able to make straight what God has made crooked?

- A. Solomon wrote in **Chapter 3 - Ecclesiastes 3:22 NAU** - "I have seen that nothing is better than that man should be happy in his activities, for that is his lot. For who will bring him to see what will occur after him?"

¹ Thomas Boston, *The Crook in the Lot*, (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications – originally published after Boston's death in 1732 – The SDG edition was published in 2001).

- B. What happens when there is a crook in our lot? We can't straighten what God has made crooked. But can we receive it as God's perfect will for us?

Boston wrote: "As to the crook in your lot, God has made it; and it must continue while he will have it so. Should you apply your utmost force to even it or make it straight, your attempt will be in vain; it will not alter it in spite of all that you can do. Only he who made it can mend it or make it straight. This consideration, this view of the matter, is a proper means to silence and to satisfy men, and to bring them unto a dutiful submission to their Maker and Governor under the crook in their lot."²

Conclusion:

1. Solomon is giving a practical exposition on true wisdom. The wise love God's providence. We may not always understand the why, but we can receive it and continue in prayer.
As Douglas O'Donnell writes: "God's mysterious providence is too wonderful to comprehend; human perceptions of justice are not the scales on which the righteousness of God is weighed; and God has an inescapable purpose in whatever he does, even if that purpose is never revealed to the creature it affects."³
2. There are those who turn away from God during adversity. May we flee to Him. We must guard our heart against complaining but rather submit to God's hand of providence. But submission and contentment does not deny the grace of prayer.
3. We can find great comfort that God can make the crooked straight. He hears the prayers of His children and works for their good. It may be for our good that our adversity continues. And in this we must be thankful.

² Ibid., page 3.

³ Douglas Sean O'Donnell, *Ecclesiastes*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Iain M. Duguid, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2014), 142.