

Text: Ecclesiastes 7:14

Meaning: Solomon shared about the value of adversity

Big Idea: Adversity has great value in our lives

Objective: I want the hearers to lean into their adversity

Theme: CONSIDERATIONS, what should I consider in adversity?

The MINISTRY OF ADVERSITY

Adversity ministers to us. God works through our difficulties and our mistakes to grow us in Him – when we get honest about our sins, struggles, and our feelings about a matter.

Thomas Edison – As an inventor, *Edison made 1,000 unsuccessful attempts* at inventing the light bulb.

When a reporter asked, "How did it feel to fail 1,000 times?" Edison replied, "I didn't fail 1,000 times. The light bulb was an invention with 1,000 steps."

"Those who dare to fail miserably can achieve greatly." — **John F. Kennedy**

If you're not failing you're not trying!

Winston Churchill

Success is not final. Failure is not fatal. It is the courage to continue that counts....Success is going from failure to failure without losing your enthusiasm.

Francis Chan – I'm not afraid of failure. I'm afraid of succeeding at that which does not matter.

Romans 5:3-5

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,⁴ and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,⁵ and hope does not put us to shame,

because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Proverbs 24:16

for the righteous falls seven times and rises again

Today, we are going to see where God tells us the same thing through the pen of Solomon – the adversity actually ministers to us.

READ ECCLESIASTES 7:14

CONSIDER (v.14) – RAAH in the Hebrew. Same word we have already looked at in this series translated ENJOYMENT. It means to SEE, to RECOGNIZE, to have PROPER PERSPECTIVE ON REALITY AND ETERNITY.

Solomon uses the word BETTER 5 time in the first 8 verses here and it's in the context of adversity. So, in adversity there are some better things than happen than would have happened had you not faced adversity.

You could summarize the first 14 verses by simply saying ADVERSITY IS BETTER THAN PROSPERITY. Adversity is what leads to true prosperity.

What should I CONSIDER in ADVERSITY?

1. CHARACTER IS BETTER THAN PROSPERITY (V.1)

Ecclesiastes 7:1

A good name is better than precious ointment,
and the day of death than the day of birth

This is an interesting verse. Why would Solomon compare a good name to precious ointment? Why not speak of silver or gold? A good reputation was highly regarded in Hebrew culture, as well as

perfumes and fragrant oils. The pouring of oil over the head was representative of the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Solomon is contrasting outward appearance versus inward character. Perfume was a cover-up, it was used to mask any unpleasant aromas, but character is genuine. The second half of the verse gives us some indication also to the meaning. In Matthew 26 Jesus said when the lady anointed him with expensive perfume in an extravagant sign of worship she was anointing his body for burial. So, the point here is expensive perfume won't cover up your sin at the time of your death. Only godly character will do!

You can dress up a dead man all you want to, but the fact remains that he's dead! At my death it won't matter what kind of casket I'm in or how elaborate my headstone is. The wealth I've accumulated and the notoriety I've gained won't suffice. It's only godly character that will matter at that point! A life surrendered to Jesus!

I'd rather be a poor saint at my death than a rich sinner! When I die just throw me in a box, love on my family, and sing praises to Jesus, cause I'm not there! I'll be in heaven with the Lord Jesus Christ!

It's been said if we take care of our character the Lord will take care of our reputation. It's also been said don't let your success outrun your integrity. Some people's talent and charisma outrun their walk with Christ.

What does character have to do with adversity? It's through adversity and our perseverance in faith through adversity that our character is strengthened.

James 1:2-4

Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

Also, adversity REVEALS OUR CHARACTER. It's much like the purification process for gold. In order to purify gold you heat it up and when it begins to liquify the impurities come to the top.

Beloved, when things get HOT what comes RISING UP? Anger, selfishness, lust, greed, fear.

When things get hard, don't ever forget that a good name is better than anything money can buy. Godly character is better than prosperity.

2. SORROW IS BETTER THAN LAUGHTER (v.3)

Ecclesiastes 7:3

*Sorrow is better than laughter,
for by sadness of face the heart is made glad.*

How can sorrow be better than laughter? Sorrow refers to experiencing grief through the death of a loved one or through a significant loss. So, as he talks much about death here and the house of mourning. When you go through loss it causes you to take to heart what really matters in life.

Only God can put the FUN in your FUNERAL. Death for the child of God is just the beginning of unfathomable joy. Oh what hope we have in Christ!

Also, the word for sorrow here carries the idea of anger or frustration.

So, those things which sometimes FRUSTRATE US are the very things God is using to GROW US.

50 most annoying things about life

1. Telemarketing calls
2. Stuck in traffic

- 3. People who take up two parking places**
- 4. People who leave their shopping cart in parking spot**
- 5. People texting and walking**
- 6. Airport delays and cancellations**
- 7. People who don't use turn signals**
- HOME**
- 8. Drinking from the milk jug**
- 9. Not changing out the toilet paper roll**
- 10. Not putting the cap on the toothpaste**
- 11. Filling the trash can to overflowing but not taking it out**
- 12. Going to the bathroom and not turning the fan on**

Those things in life which are difficult and hard and uncomfortable and often the very things God uses to grow us. We so often misconstrue the will of God to be those things which we find comfortable or easy, but all throughout the New Testament we see the Apostles being persecuted for the faith and yet going right back to those same places to make disciples of Christ.

Scripture also speaks of godly sorrow over our sin and how we should respond when convicted by God or confronted by another brother or sister.

2 Corinthians 7:10

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret

Our DISAPPOINTMENTS are often GOD'S DIVINE APPOINTMENTS.

Psalm 32 – the sin I uncover God covers. The sin I cover God uncovers. Godly sorrow and confession is what is needed if I want the grace of God to cover my sin.

3. CORRECTION IS BETTER THAN CONTINUATION (v.5, 6)

Ecclesiastes 7:5

It is better for a man to hear the rebuke of the wise than to hear the song of fools. For as the crackling of thorns under a pot, so is the laughter of the fools

Here is verse 5 Solomon uses the metaphor of cooking a meal over an open fire to describe our lives. So, just as it takes heat and time to produce a delightful meal, so too it takes testing and time to develop a life of character. And he says here that the laughter and entertainment of fools is like kindling wood for the fire. Whenever you want to start a fire you can throw a bunch of twigs and thorns on it and get an impressive flame, but it doesn't last and doesn't provide the heat necessary to cook the meal.

WE NEED SOME GODLY PEOPLE IN OUR LIVES TO BRING THE HEAT IF WE ARE GOING TO GROW!

So, the wisdom and counsel of other wise men and women in your life is like putting logs on the fire. It provides a warmth that is necessary to your growth as a person.

We grow in life through accountability and correction and coaching and advice from those who have been through what we've been through. Solomon said this same thing another way in Proverbs 27:6 when he said, "faithful are the wounds of a friend but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy."

Our culture says, "don't correct me." "Don't tell me how to live my life." We've even gone so far in this culture as to throw around words like harassment and discrimination simply when people try to correct others.

Friend, when someone calls out your sin it's not DISCRIMINATION it's CONSIDERATION. It's a sign of love not hate.

Who do you have in your life that will question you when you get off course?

IF YOU SURROUND YOURSELF WITH PEOPLE WHO ONLY AGREE WITH YOU SOON YOU WILL BE SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE WHO HAVE NOTHING TO SAY

4. FINISHING WELL IS BETTER THAN STARTING STRONG (v.8-9)

Ecclesiastes 7:8-9

*Better is the end of a thing than its beginning,
and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.
Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the
heart of fools.*

Both are helpful, but how you finish ultimately is more important than how you begin.

Patient – translated LONG in the Hebrew. The word means to tarry long, longsuffering is another biblical word for this. It means to suffer long under a burden and an unfavorable situation.

Verse 9 – Be not quick in your spirit to become angry.

We live in an instant message, immediate notification culture today. That's just not how the Christian life works nor is it how relationships work. You don't grow strong in Christ in a day, nor do you grow a strong family or have strong relationships in a day. You don't build a strong church in a day, or a year, or even 2 or 3 years. It takes LONGEVITY and PERSEVERANCE and COMMITMENT to build something lasting.

PROCESS DETERMINES SUCCESS

The process in your life is what leads to true growth in Jesus, not just one event or one. It's those daily decisions to love God, love your family, and seek the Lord that leads to real spiritual growth and success.

Not only do you get what your PAY FOR you also get what you STAY FOR! IF YOU WANT A DEEP WALK WITH THE LORD AND DEEP RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE THAT MATTER FOR THE KINGDOM YOU HAVE TO STAY THERE!

Staying in the Church - Staying in the Word - Staying in Prayer
Just keep going back to Christ and His Church!

He who ABIDES in ME bears much fruit! It means to remain, to dwell in, to continue in.

One of the greatest gifts of adversity, when given to Jesus, is
RESILIENCY – SO, LEAN INTO YOUR ADVERSITY