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## Living with the End in Mind

### 9 – The Wise and the wicked

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We have been going through Ecclesiastes. Most theologians believe Solomon wrote this book. Outside of Jesus, Solomon was the wisest man to ever walk the earth. I believe he wrote this book. The reason I believe he wrote the book is because I feel like it's consistent with Song of Solomon and Proverbs. But even though he's the wisest man, we won't say he always made the wisest decisions, which is crazy, and we are going to talk about it here in a second.

This whole Chapter 2 is actually about the wise and the wicked. That word *wicked* seems intense. The other day, I told my wife, "Baby, I love to spoil you." She's like, "Whoa, you love to bless me. Let's get that word correct; I don't want to be spoiled; I want to be blessed." We hear this word *wicked*, and we think of like horror movies. I don't watch any horror movies ever. Not because I'm a Christian, but because I enjoy my sleep. And I pay for the electricity in my house, so I don't need the lights on all night either. I'm not judging you if you watch them. I've just never seen one Michael Meyer movie in my life and I don't plan on it.

But when we hear this word *wicked*, we think things that maybe aren't actually true. The word *wicked*, if you look it up, it's just means evil or morally wrong. If morally wrong is the definition of wicked, then every single person I'm looking at right now is wicked and you are looking at somebody who is wicked. As a matter of fact, our hearts are wicked. There is nothing not wicked in us apart from Jesus.

Solomon writes this chapter, and he talks about a contrast between the wise and the wicked. As a matter of fact, Solomon could have had anything. God talks to Solomon and says, "What do you want?" And Solomon prays for something. He prays for wisdom and discernment. Wow, that's crazy. God said, "Because you didn't ask for materials and because you didn't ask for riches and because you didn't ask for a more abundant things, I'm actually going to give you wisdom and discernment. And you are going to have to steward a plethora of blessings I'm going to bestow upon you." He could have had anything and he asked for wisdom and discernment.

Here's the crazy thing we know about Solomon. He didn't always apply that wisdom and discernment God gave him. How do I know that? The brother had 800 concubines. That is not wise. I don't care what world you live in, that is not wise. So, don't just pray for wisdom and discernment, pray for wisdom and discernment applied in your life. What good is it if you come in here every week and you get knowledge from sermons and messages and you grow and you learn and you study throughout the week and you never apply it?

What good is that wisdom you've receive from the Word. What good is that discernment the Holy Spirit is giving you, that lives inside of you, if you're not walking it out and living it?"

One of my favorite quotes that I've learned throughout life is that *"Knowledge without application is meaningless."* You can know the Bible inside and out, frontwards and back, but if you don't apply it, what does it matter? If you know the wisdom that is in this Word, but you still walk counter to it in wickedness or in sin, what good is the knowledge that you possess? What good is any knowledge you have if you don't walk it out. Don't just attain wisdom, don't just attain knowledge when you come to church, walk it out. That's the wise. The wise don't just get wisdom, but they apply the wisdom that God is bestowing upon them.

Death is undefeated.....Sort of. I'm going to explain here in a second.

Ecclesiastes 8: 7-8 **7 Since no one knows the future, who can tell someone else what is to come? 8 As no one has power over the wind to contain it, so no one has power over the time of their death.** Except one person. Who has power over death? Jesus. Good job. 99.9% of the time if you just say Jesus, you're going to be right. Jesus has power over death. We also know that Enoch, it says in Genesis, walked with God and he was no more. So, it doesn't look like Enoch ever died. There is also a prophet named Elijah. What happened to Elijah? He was taken up in a chariot of fire. That would have been a really cool trick to watch.

And then there is somebody in John 11 that actually does die. Lazarus dies. As a matter of fact, at 11:14, Jesus pronounces him dead. And then at 11:43, he pulls him out of the grave. The dude has been dead for four days. Lazarus was dead for four days. Jesus says, "Lazarus, come out here." Lazarus comes out and it's another one of Jesus' miracles. They realize now, before he even raised himself from the tomb, that this man has power over death.

Can you imagine? Lazarus is all in. "You are the messiah. I was dead and now I'm not dead. You are the messiah." He wasn't scared of anything. Can you imagine Cesar or Rome trying to threaten him? "Lazarus, stop preaching about Jesus or we're going to kill you." Lazarus says, "I've already been dead. You're going to threaten me with death? I know the one who conquered death and he let me out."

You see, when you know Jesus like Lazarus knew Jesus, you don't fear death. There is no fear in death when you know the one who removed the sting from it, which is Jesus. And so, death is sort of undefeated.

Now, for the believer, for the wise, for those who walk in righteousness and in Jesus and understand who he is, there is no fear. For the wicked, for the morally wrong that haven't had their sins justified on the cross, there's a lot of fear. That's because the reality is they don't know when they are going to die or how they are going to die, none of us do, and there's something to fear. But there is no fear in Lazarus' life because he knew the one that defeated it. There is no fear for us when we know the one who has defeated it.

It goes on to say in Ecclesiastes 8: 10, ***Then too, I saw the wicked buried—those who used to come and go from the holy place and receive praise in the city where they did this. This too is meaningless.***

You should never praise sin. Whether it's our own sin, somebody else's sin; we shouldn't even share sin. Shouldn't name it, shouldn't praise it. We should never get excited about sharing or praising sin. As a matter of fact, I think the only thing conceivably worse than any of our sin in this room is justifying it. How do we do that? "Well, I'm not as bad as my neighbor." "I'm not as bad as this person." "I look better..." God is not worried about your neighbor or the other person; he's worried about you. The reason I say the only thing conceivable worse than our sin is justifying it is 1 John 1: 9. It says, ***If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.***

There's a big *if* in the first part of that verse. If we confess... Guess what? If you justify your sin, you'll never be in a place to confess your sin. Because confessing comes with humility and brokenness. Justification comes with pride and trying to cover up. So, when we ever think about praising sin, we'll never get to a place of humility, we'll never get to a place where we need to be with forgiveness, we'll never be in a place where we need to humble ourselves and walk through that process.

I showed this illustration a couple of weeks back and I'm okay with sharing it again because I think it so pertinent and important. The proud never come to heaven. The wicked never get to heaven. Let me explain and reshare this illustration quickly by D.A. Carson. Matthew 7: 14 says, ***Small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few will find it.*** You can't get into heaven on your own pride. It doesn't work. You can't fit. Matthew 7: 14 is correct.

As a matter of fact, when I was a young believer and I read that verse, I was terrified. I was like, "I don't know if I'm getting through this small gate, and I don't know if I getting through the narrow road." The reality is it's not about what we've done or what we can do in puffing ourselves up in knowledge, puffing ourselves up in wisdom. What good is it if it isn't applied? When we obtain biblical wisdom and biblical knowledge, it cultivates humility in us. As a matter of fact, Christ is the epitome of humility. We see this in Philippians 2. Christ says, ***Who is first will be last and he who is last will be first.*** He flips everything upside down in his kingdom. It's the opposite of everything. The prideful are in the back and the humble are up front.

The only way any of us ever comes to the kingdom of God is we've got to deflate ourselves, humble ourselves, then we get into heaven. That's it. you can't get through on your own. And what's crazy is once you come to know him, he fills you up with his Spirit. And then you fit in the kingdom of God. You've grown more in the awareness of the cross, more in the awareness of who he is, more in the awareness of your sin, his holiness, and how much you need him. Sin is never to be praised, especially as you are growing in your relationship with the Lord. It never takes place.

It goes on to say in Ecclesiastes 8: 11 - ***11 When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, people's hearts are filled with schemes to do wrong.*** Ladies and gentlemen, this is so important for you to hear. You may be the only Bible a non-believer ever reads. When we retaliate or we act or we

respond in the same way in traffic or at a restaurant when a waiter or waitress messes up our order... Or we're in a hurry in a grocery store or we are just vulgar or venomous or rude, or we get online and we spit off at someone who doesn't agree with us politically, they are reading a Bible in that moment. And, ladies and gentlemen, I've never once in my life, and I've been in ministry now for 23 years... I've never once in my life heard somebody say, "I came to know the Lord because this person that claimed to be a Christian cussed me out online and after they cussed me out, I was like, 'Man, I want to hear more about your Jesus.'" I've never heard that.

But in 23 years of ministry, I've heard people come to know the Lord Jesus because there was this guy, or this lady and she was so sweet and such a great listener. He was so kind and so generous, and he tipped me really well and we had a disagreement but the way he handled our disagreement was in such a gentle and respectful way. It was done with such courtesy and heartfelt compassion. I never experienced somebody like that before, so it intrigued me to want to know more. Like what does this person have that I don't have? And they don't talk to me like everybody else talks to me. And they could disagree with me, but they could do it in a loving way. I've never experienced this. This is so unique." I've heard several stories like that. As a matter of fact, I'm going to end with a similar story like that as we wrap things up in a little bit. So, we are the only Bible that people may every read.

So, Joe Burrell fans, Chief fans, you might be the only Bible they ever read today. Just because something is not going your way, what are they reading? As a matter of fact, your friends that are coming over to watch the football game with you today and your Chiefs aren't doing well and they're not believers, what's your response? Is the remote going through the TV? Are we stomping. Does your wife have to stay away from you for the two hours following the game? The Chiefs ain't Jesus. So, just know everything we encounter and everything we go through, you may be the only Bible people every read. I love how Martin Luther King, Jr. put it. He said, "*Darkness cannot drive out darkness. Only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate. Only love can do that.*"

One of our five values at this church is evangelism. We have discipleship, fellowship, worship. Evangelism is one of those five. As we come and pour into you and pour wisdom and pour knowledge into you, the application part... Remember knowledge without application is meaningless? The application for you is to go and be the Bible people can read. And then when you engage, engage and share the gospel. Share the good news that you have. If you are the wise walking with Jesus, then rescue the wicked. Otherwise, you are being wicked to the wicked. But if you're wise, then share the good news that you have. And as Christ in you, they will know you by your love. That's what Jesus said to his disciples. "***They will know you are my disciples by the way you love other people.***"

By the way you love other people that also cheer for the Chiefs, by the way you love people that cheer for the Bengals. But the way you love the people that cheer for different teams than you. By the way you love people that don't think the same way as you. As a matter of fact, in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, Jesus said, "***Love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you.***"

So, who are you supposed to love? Yes, the people that make the hair on the back of your neck stand up when they walk in the room. That's who Jesus told you to love. Ladies and gentlemen, you have permission to hate one person in this world, and that is Satan. That's where it stops. That's the list.

And you get to hate sin. You get to hate sin and you get to hate the Father of sin which is Satan. That's it. You have permission to hate no one else according to the gospel.

And love actually draws the wicked to the wise. Love actually draws the wicked to the Word. Love actually draws those who are wicked to the goodness of God.

I don't know if MLK just took this quote out of the verse, but the first part of this is Romans 12: 21 – ***Do not overcome evil, but overcome evil with good.*** Who is good? Jesus is good. As a matter of fact, the rich, young ruler comes to Jesus and says, "Good teacher." He says, "Why do you call me good? There is only one who is good." The rich, young ruler didn't realize Jesus was the one who is good. He's the good. So, don't be overcome by Satan, but overcome evil with Jesus. Jesus is the answer. Overcome it with Jesus.

I lead a staff meeting every Monday morning. I have about 18 staff members and I lead a meeting. I'm going to show you a similar illustration that I did with them. It's not as big because I don't want a huge mess. A couple years back, I grabbed a big milk carton and put it in the middle of the big conference table that we have. As I set the milk carton on the table, I grabbed a nail. I just went up to the milk carton and just started poking holes in it. There's milk going everywhere. Some of my staff just start doing what a lot of us do and they just start pointing at this mess saying, "It's spilling, it's spilling." You don't think I know it's spilling. I'm the one that poked the holes in it. Some of them went and grabbed napkins and started cleaning up the mess. One staff member out of the 18... I actually had duct tape right next to the mess. One staff member went as fast as they could, while everyone else was scrambling to go grab napkins, while most of the people were just pointing at it, one staff member grabbed a piece of duct tape and fixed everything.

There are three types of people in here. A lot of us love to just sit there and point at the problem. "Look, it's spilling, there's a problem." "Look, they are sinful." "Look, there's a problem." Then some people try to fix the problem, but they don't really know how to fix the problem. They try to get to the external rather than the internal. They try to fix the outside rather than getting to someone's heart. And a few of us are willing to take the time to sacrifice the emotional energy to be like, "Here's the problem; I'm going to fix it." We are going to be able to salvage as much as we can.

For younger people, you're pointing at the church. "Look, the church does this, the church does that. The church is the problem." Why not instead of pointing at the problem, become a part of the solution. What I was trying to teach my staff is stop being overcome by evil, overcome evil with good. Be a part of the solution. Stop telling me everything that's wrong and be a part of the solution.

We love to do this with work. This boss is wrong. This employee is wrong. Be a part of the solution. There are two options if you don't like your job. Either be a part of the solution or quit. And then if you go to your next job and there's the same problem, be a part of the solution or quit. And then if you go to your next job and there's the same problem, there's a common denominator, and it's not your boss. Christians should not be a part of problem. We have Jesus, which means we have the answer, the only answer, and we should be a part of the solution. So, stop pointing fingers. "See what the left is doing." "See what the church is doing wrong." "See what's wrong with their worship." "See what's wrong with

their preachers..." And you point at all the problems. Or your like, "That's a mess. I'm going to try to clean it up..." "God, how do I fix this? Oh, you want me to get to the heart." Now it's not spilling anymore. Now we're saving less collateral damage. Now we're being a part of the solution.

Ladies and gentlemen, the wise thing to do is to be a part of the solution, not the problem. Gossip is part of the problem. Slander is part of the problem. Hate is part of the problem. Now, love is part of the solution. Forgiveness is part of the solution. Listening is part of the solution. What good is wisdom if we don't apply it? What good is wisdom if we just point fingers at the problem and don't offer ourselves as part of the solution when you all know who the solution is, which is Jesus? Can I get an amen?

**12 Although a wicked person** (or a sinful person) **who commits a hundred crimes may live a long time...** So, Solomon is saying here is Even though you might see evil, sinful people prosper and be wealthy and whatever else, **I know that it will go better with those who fear God...** I used to wrestle with this phrase "fear God." As a matter of fact, if you look at the Hebrew word, it's actually a reverential awe. **...who are reverent before him.**

So, as believers in Christ understand the same thing that Lazarus understood, we have no fear of death, we fear nothing. We have a reverential awe for our creator who created the cosmos. And when you step out in the Ozarks in the winter, it's amazing the stars that just illuminate in the sky. There is a reverential awe for him. We should be in reverential awe before him. He's the creator of the universe.

Now, for those who are wicked, there should be a legitimate fear because he defeated death for those who trust he defeated death. Those that don't know him will still taste death for eternity. So, finite freedom will not outlast infinite justice. So many of us think we need to be the one to enact justice on the behalf of people. Eternal justice is not our doing. Now, social justice, yes, God invites us into that. Eternal justice is God. Your job, as a believer, is to let them read a really good Bible that is accurate and true, that shows love and forgiveness and grace.

Most non-believers and atheists that I encounter, their issue with Christianity isn't Jesus. Their issue is his followers. It's that his followers are just as wicked as the wicked.

This is my prayer for Woodland Hills, for everyone that engages in this church, that grows in this church, that's built up in this church, everything about this church... This church is phenomenal, but here's my prayer for this church. I pray that a non-believer wouldn't say this, that a wicked person wouldn't say this: "I don't believe in Jesus and see those people that go to Woodland Hills, their lives look no different than mine not believing in Jesus than there's do looking to Jesus."

But what if they said this. "Man, I don't believe in Jesus, but that neighbor that goes to Woodland Hills, there is something so uniquely different about them. They have a joy I can't explain. They have a countenance that just drives me crazy in a good way. They have something I don't have, and I wish I knew what it was."

That's not worrying about your finite freedom outlasting infinite justice. Those who are in Christ will experience freedom for ever and ever. And that's the important thing.

***15 So I commend the enjoyment of life, because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life God has given them under the sun.***

God wants you to enjoy life. Being under leadership and how much he has pushed this on me, where I've been into maybe some legalism before I got with Ted, this has been the most freeing thing. You have no idea how blessed we are to have a pastor that doesn't back away from truth, who hasn't wavered, faithfully loves his wife, faithfully loves his kids. His kids praise him for who he constantly is. It's unbelievable how blessed this church is to have the leader we have in Ted Cunningham.

Ted wants you to enjoy life and he pushes people to the truth of the gospel so that we all enjoy life. That's what God wants. He didn't put here and say, "Hey, enjoy earth in the prison you're in. Yes, you'll have trial, yes, you'll have tribulations, yes, it will be difficult," but at the end of the day, God is not some prison foreman that just wants you to hate life. He wants you to enjoy life, he wants you to enjoy the taste of food, he wants you to enjoy fellowship, he wants you to enjoy your Chiefs. He wants you to enjoy all those things. But ultimately, he wants to be first in your life.

Some of you know this. I coach basketball. I'm around basketball guys all the time. I have a player that's going to be in the next service His name is Colin. I've shared the gospel with him 50 times this fall. He got with me in August. I've shared the gospel. I shared Roman's Road with him, which is Romans 3: 23 – ***For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*** Romans 6: 23 – ***But the wages of sin is death.*** And the Romans 5:8 – ***Yet while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*** And then Romans 10: 9-10 – ***If we confess with our mouth and believe in our heart that Jesus Christ is Lord and that God raised him from the dead, then we will be saved.***

I even walked him through the EvangeCube. I said, "Colin, your over here, your death. You're separated from God which it says in Revelation 4:8 – ***Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty who was and is and is to come.*** You fall short of the glory of God. ***Yet, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*** John 3:16 – ***for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whoever would believe in him shall not perish but have everlasting life.*** And then after they crucified him, they buried him in a tomb with Roman soldiers and they put a Roman seal on it to make sure no one was going in and no one was coming out or it. It didn't matter because he tasted death so you and I don't have to. He lived the life we all should have lived, died the death we all deserved to die, and because of that, after he defeated the tomb, he came out of the tomb and says, John 14: 6 – ***I'm the way, I'm the truth, and I am the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.*** And then you have a choice. You either keep walking in the wicked or you surrender your life to Jesus and enjoy eternity in heaven. That's what the gospel says.

It went over his head. I shared the gospel with this guy six ways to seven, every way I could explain it to him. Then two weeks ago, he came into my office. We sat down and had a chat. I said, "I want to show you a video clip." I can't even show you guys this video clip in service because it's just too intense. I'm

just going to show you the picture. I told Colin, "I want to show you a video clip." I show him a video clip from *The Passion of Christ*. I don't know why. Something was stirring in me. I don't think he realized what Jesus did for him to save him. I showed him this video clip. This was like two Thursdays ago when it was just raining all day. It wasn't a cold rain, but it just rained all day. I showed him this video clip and I watched him watching the video clip. You could see his eyes start to water up, you see tears starting to come. The video clip gets done and it's one of the most brutal scenes I've ever seen in any movie ever. They wanted to capture the reality of what took place with our Savior, the slaughtered Lamb. Colin teared up and he said, "Why did he do that?" I said, "Colin, he did that for you. He took that death so you don't have to."

Colin said, "I'm ready." I said, "What do you mean you're ready?" he said, "I'm ready to surrender my life to Jesus, I'm done. I'm all in. That's a true story. Stick around for next service to ask him yourself if you want. We pray, he surrenders his life to Jesus. When we got done praying, all the clouds cleared up. I remember this day. It was cloudy all day, rainy all day. About 4:00, the sun just starts beaming through my office. I said, "Collin, 2 Corinthians 5: 17 – **Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old is gone, the new has come.** You've gone from darkness to light. You've gone from wicked to wise. You've gone from death to life."

He and I have been doing a Bible study together. We text back and forth on verses. I also told him, "Colin, now it's really important that you keep entering into things that stir your heart's affections for Jesus. It's really important that you walk through those things and you're in those things."

Woodland Hills, I have a question for you today. What stirs your heart's affections for Jesus. What is it. Is it worship? Is it when you spend time alone in the Word alone and he speaks to you? Is it fellowship with other believers? Listen to me. Satan wants nothing in your life that stirs your heart's affection for Jesus. He wants to rob it. He wants you so consumed with social media, he wants you so consumed with the news, he wants you so consumed with the wickedness, he wants nothing that stirs your heart's affection for Jesus. Because when our heart's affections are stirred for Jesus, when we want to live for him, when we want to walk with him, when we want to glorify him.

For me, Woodland Hills, it's his creation. When you get me away from all the noise and all the people and everything else and I'm in his creation that man hasn't ruined and that man hasn't touched and I'm just alone with him under the stars and the majesty of the mountains or whatever it may be, he's stirs my heart's affections for him like crazy.

You say, "Adam, there's nothing that stir's my heart's affections for Jesus." Then I would just gently ask, "Do you know Jesus? Have you surrendered your life to the One who has defeated the tomb and tasted death so that you don't have to? "But, Adam, you don't know what I've done. My past, my wickedness." I know this: there's no past, present, or future sin of yours that has more power than the cross of Jesus Christ. He says, run to those things that stir your heart's affections for him. Run to the Word, run to prayer, run to creation, run to fellowship, run to meditation, run to silence, run to solitude. Run to these things.

Author Gary Thomas writes a phenomenal book called *Sacred Pathways*. Discovering what stirs your heart's affections for Jesus. And Ladies and gentlemen, when I don't run to those things, I get in a temperamental place. But when I keep running to those things to stir my heart's affections for Jesus, I'm a lot better Bible for other people to read. I'm a lot more patient, I'm a lot more filled with grace, I'm a lot more filled with love, I'm a lot more filled with compassion.

So, Woodland Hills, run to those things, run to those places, run to those people that stir your heart's affections for Jesus because nothing in the enemy wants your heart to be stirred toward Jesus. Satan hates and will not allow silence in your life because he knows in those moments of silence is where God stirs your heart's affections. That's where Jesus can get you alone. So, the noisier your world is, the louder your world is, the less likely your heart's affections will be stirred for him.

Father God, thank you so much for this church. God, I pray that if there is anyone in here that hasn't surrendered their life to you, they would come up, meet with the prayer team, and have a conversation. Nothing weird, nothing awkward, just you, pulling on their heart strings today. You, sharing the gospel and illuminating it to them today.

I pray that you be with this church body. I pray as they leave here, they would be a glorious Bible that non-believers read this week. Be with them. Thank you for Ted and creating him and what he means to this church, and all the leaders. Father God, we love you so much. It's in the mighty and matchless name of Jesus we pray. And all God's people said... Amen.