



Big question: Would you live differently if you knew when you were going to die?

Cross: The Loving Providence of God

1 But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God.

Realizing this changes the way that you look at and live in the world. We need this perspective b/c righteous or unrighteous, we don't know what is coming next except for death.

HEAT 1: The Reality of Life's Uncertainties (we must respond biblically)

Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him.

What kind of treatment the children of God will receive is unknown; you can have a great guy who loves Jesus and has a tough life and a angry hateful man that skates through with bliss even under the care of God's good providence. The righteous have no guarantee of a blissful life...

**Are you comparing your life to others and feeling disappointed? Do you feel you deserve more? If you find yourself feeling discontent or jealous, consider if you feel you have earned something with God. In light of our sins, in spite of our goodness, what do we really deserve?**

THORN 1: Prosperity Theology

*To teach this is to insult every believer throughout history who has known death, illness, poverty, and misery...to press this theology on the sick and poor of today is to place a millstone around the neck of those who are drowning rather than offering them the hope and comfort of the Gospel. God is much more concerned to make us holy and to shape us in the image of Christ than to make us happy, wealthy, and healthy. (Ian Provan)*

**How are we doing at being content with being shaped into the image of Christ VS wealthy and healthy? Confess and repent to your community your frustration and inability to treasure the right things. Ask for help to treasure Christ.**

You don't know what's ahead & Even Your Wisdom Will Let You Down

11 Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all. He's explored wisdom throughout his journey...Wisdom has it's limits, uncertainties in life will catch up with us. Life is full of sudden turns and experiences. We think that b/c we observe cause and effect in the world that we've got it all figured out.

HEAT 2: The Certainty of Death

2 It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. 3 This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

Death comes to all—the righteous and the wicked, the good man and the evil man, the clean and the unclean, the faithful worshipper and the indolent non-worshipper, the good man and the sinner, the loyal covenant keeper and the disloyal covenant breaker. He's forcing the reality of universal death on us and saying, “You've got to have an answer to that.”

**What is your answer for your sins? Your judgment of others, selfishness, pride and materialism? Are you hoping to have it work out someday? Are you hoping to improve enough so to not be judged for these?**

The 'evil' Side of Death

Vs. 3 - This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all...

Solomon doesn't see this as a natural occurrence, but something that comes from the hand of God. **Dying is a great evil. Not just because it's bad to be dead, but because dying is a sign of God's judgment.** It is a moral judgment against the rebellion of evil men. We were created to live with a living God. But the wage for sin is death. The only way to get rid of death is to get rid of sin. That's why Jesus had to come and live in our place and die to pay the price for our sin so that we could live. And so, Solomon is saying, "Hey listen, it doesn't matter if your righteous or unrighteous, in the end we're all going to die. And this is evidence that something has gone wrong."

**How have we succumbed to the sentimentality of death? Do we brush it aside as a "non issue"? Do we offer platitudes? Or do we weep with those who weep and trust in Christ to redeem us from the horrible judgment of death?**

**4 But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.**

The sentimentality is gone...but there's a glimmer of hope. As long as we're living, even though we're dogs, we have the chance to repent.

**5 For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten.**

You'd like for people to get together and talk about you...but they won't.

**6 Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun.**

**All the pettiness...all the frustration, all the games we play with each other...are they worth it? Is it worth the precious finite amount of days you have on this earth? Confess where you have fallen into this trap. Ask God for help to fear him and him alone.**

Even worse...we don't even know when it will happen...could be this afternoon.

**12 For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.**

Life's unexpected twists and certain end provide you with opportunities to reflect and repent...they are moments of Grace. You get to look reality straight in the eye and evaluate what you're living for. These twists and circumstances are acts of God's Grace in your life when you begin to see them that way.

**Talk about a recent or current "twist" that is bringing you grace to evaluate what you a living for. What have you learned about yourself that you don't like? What are you starting to treasure or hoping to treasure instead? How is this coming about?**

Solomon wants us to view the twists and turns of this life biblically because the Christian's confident trust in God's providence frees him to enjoy God's gifts. It saves him from being paralyzed by the trials of this life.

**So...You are going to die...maybe today...how will you live?**

**Fruit:**

**1) Live Deep**

**7 Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do. 8 Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head**

**God wants us to trust Him and live deeply and joyfully.**

Pursue the depths of community...eat with gladness, get together with folks and enjoy them and creation. Drink your wine (a command) with joy! This is what we'll be doing in heaven...food / drinks / friends at the wedding supper of the Lamb. Nothing beats a great dinner party.

**Have you fallen into the trap of holiness by abstention instead of holiness by redemption? Do you feel better about yourself because you avoid certain things? How about when you are able to avoid a particular bad habit? What fruit does this bear?**

**Are you able to really celebrate with others and enjoy their company? What is holding you back? Do you see this as essential to living out the gospel?**

**(If you do not have peace with God, and are not currently enjoying his grace, you may not feel free to partake. Take time to reflect on the doctrines of his grace: justification, expiation, adoption, etc)**

2) Live in light of the cross...

- Take what God made good and sin made bad and use it in the way that God intended.
- Our days are short...we need to live life from the hand of God before the face of God.

.9 Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. 10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

3) Trust in God's providential control...

- Enjoy your wife and your marriage;
- Work with zeal because there is no work in death and do it with all your might and you don't live in the past.
- Be content with the lot that God has given you now, and you work out of a realization that God has approved you by His grace.

How God's providence works...

God's providence liberates us from the paralysis of, "Oh, no, I'm going to lose this one day" by saying, "Right, you are. It's absolutely certain; it's not a possibility. You are going to lose this. It is not going to be this way forever. Enjoy life now. Work for God, live for God, enjoy the things that He has given to us. Enjoy the good of this life. Serve Him productively. Care for others. This will go away."

**What are you worried about right now that your community can help you apply to this truth? How does this free you from paralysis?**

Conclusion:

Look at life apart from Him; Solomon says it can only be shallow. Look at life through the lenses of His good providence, and even the trials of life seem to be meaningful, and the little things in life become sources of depth and joy.

Reflection

- **What stood out to you this morning? How are you compelled to respond?**
- **Are you able to enjoy life deeply as a gift from God?**
- **Do you draw comfort from the fact that life is in God's hands?**
- **Would you live differently if you knew when you will die? Why are you waiting?**