A Living Dog Is Better Than A Dead Lion

Text: Read Eccl. 9:4

Introduction: At first read, you might take exception to Solomon’s comparison...for it sounds like his reference to dogs is a put down...and many of you love dogs...and your K-9 pet is more a part of the family than an animal in the house...they are man’s best friend, you know. Those of you who adore your dogs, might even think that not only is our live dog better than a dead lion, but our dead dog would be better than a live lion. So how is this statement true and more especially, what is Solomon getting at? ------ Good morning!

I) Dogs were viewed in those days as unclean, scavenger animals...but even to this day we hear the expression...you dirty dog...to derogatorily speak of someone...We see in the story of the rich man and Lazarus a pathetic picture, when it says that even the dogs licked his sores....and Jesus on another occasion said, it is not right to give the children’s bread to dogs. Well, I imagine some of you dog lovers have a seat at the table for your dog. Ha! -- This text is taking for granted the ancient view of the difference between the grandeur and majesty of a lion and a pathetic, undomesticated dog. The wisest man that ever lived, baring Jesus, says in his inspired wisdom, it is better to be living a miserable dog-life, than to be a dead glorious lion. And the lesson is to be transferred to we humans...it is better to be alive, even if your life is miserable, than to be dead...no matter how great a life you once had or might have had. And I think we know this to be true...without the wise philosopher telling us...for you will hear some say in response to sympathy about someone’s condition...well, it sure beats the alternative...meaning at least I am not dead. -- But, why would Solomon say this? He says so in the verse itself... because the living have hope. This life under
the sun can get to be such a downer, so depressing, so unlikeable, that we despair for life itself....**I just wish I was dead.** To which the wise savant says, NO. YOU MUST NOT SAY THAT. Life with all its shortcomings is still preferable...for there is hope...whereas after death...no hope...and he means no hope from an earthly standpoint...without God in the picture.

II) God wishes us to view THIS life **hopefully**....not just the next one...but this one too...he purposely has subjected this life under the sun to futility IN HOPE (Romans 8). God has made us to live this life hopefully, expectantly, with dreams. And I will take it a step farther, that life under the sun, even with its sorrows, its disappointments, its injustices, its tragedies, its frustrations, its pains, its sufferings, its persecutions, etc., etc., etc. is still is to be seen as precious, a blessing, something to be cherished...to be enjoyed. And this is where I wish to guide our thoughts the next few minutes...

To love life and wish for good days is not only right, it’s natural...it’s a God-given impulse! Don’t be misled by talk about Christians being the kind that simply can’t wait to get out of this life and on to heaven. That is sheer nonsense. As we just studied at length recently, God’s will is that we preserve our bodies and our physical life, and life under the sun is to be enjoyed...and yes, **to be loved.**

What is it that keeps me from wanting to die today? Is it that I am not ready? **No.** Is it I am afraid? **I hope not.** Well what is it? It’s the joys of this life, the beauties of this creation, the intimacy with my wife, the warmth and loveliness of familiar faces and places. Jameson died a year ago...and what is one of the greatest of heartaches for Irma...all the dreams she had for his life now unfulfilled. There are people who don’t want to be separated one from another even for a day—why should we think they’d want to be separated for who knows how long? -- It isn’t hard to understand that the tormented and abused who have lived long in despair and ceaseless pain would look forward in eagerness for heaven, but even Paul says
it amounted to a **strait betwixt two**...he was torn...not at all an automatic...I WANT OUT OF HERE! NO! -- But for those to whom God has given a wonderful life—what’s the hurry?

Now, let me be crystal clear, while this lovely life of ours is to be cherished and enjoyed—it is not to be worshipped! It is to be lived and enjoyed to the glory of God and it is to be surrendered when he asks for it, without bitterness or resentment, given to him in thanksgiving expecting even greater richness. But, it is to be enjoyed. -- It is a most unfortunate circumstance that so many do not “love life.” Thousands annually commit suicide. Others, though not approaching that extreme, are terribly unhappy. Many can scarcely remember the last truly happy day they experienced. Each day is a drudgery filled with pain and woe. Unfortunately, some of these are professing children of God. Over and over you will hear they are having a bad day.

III) Back a few years ago, I was given a t-shirt by my sister Jimona for my birthday...and on the front it says: **Its All GOOD.** Well, I had not heard the expression before, and when I held it up the capital “G” in Good looked like a numeral “6” and the capital “D” looked like a zero, so I said, “**It’s all 6000?**” Ha! -- But, seriously, Its ALL good? Well, I am not going to go that far, but I will say, at the risk of sounding Pollyana-ish, Life generally is all Good to the Christian...and I mean life under the sun, not life only in Jesus.

Hezekiah when informed that he was going to die, begged God for longer life and **GOT IT!** 15 more years! Anything wrong with wanting to live a long life? Nope. The Bible often mentions those who died old and full of days as a blessing. -- Jesus said, that He came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. That is not solely in our spirits, but in this life, too. -- Jesus said that if we sacrifice for the kingdom, we will receive 100 fold in return **in this life,** as well as eternal life. -- Solomon said that we ought to eat, drink and enjoy the fruit of our labors...it is
the gift of God. Listen to Eccl. 5:18-20... Behold, what I have seen to be good and fitting is to eat and drink and find enjoyment in all the toil with which one toils under the sun the few days of his life that God has given him, for this is his lot. Everyone also to whom God has given wealth and possessions and power to enjoy them, and to accept his lot and rejoice in his toil—this is the gift of God. For he will not much remember the days of his life because God keeps him occupied with joy in his heart. -- Paul tells Timothy that God blesses men with all things richly to enjoy. -- Proverbs said rejoice with the wife of your youth...it is a gift of God. -- Psalms 127 and 128 paints a glorious picture of family life, father, mother and children. Let’s read them. -- Grandchildren are said to be the crown of old me...I want to wear that crown. -- And how about I Peter 3:10 - He who would love life and see good days let him do such and such? Now, I will not go into what all that entails...what the requirements are for making it happen, but suffice to say that it is God’s will that we love life under the sun and see good days! Amen?

IV) But, Whit my life is filled with bad things. I truly am sorry to hear that...but rest assured you are not alone...we all suffer, it is just a matter of degrees. No one, absolutely no one, is an excepted. We all have bad things happening in our lives, just like you. -- But, life can still be viewed as good. Yes it can. And yes, YOU can. If we face our problems, respond to them positively, and refuse to give in to panic, bitterness or self-pity, then adversities that come along to bury us usually have within them the potential to benefit and bless us!

We are to be the salt of the earth, right? And what does that mean? Well, it means we are to be supplying a preserving power to an otherwise putrefying world. We are to be a savoring taste to an otherwise bitter and tasteless world. My friends, to this we are called...by God. Not to add to the misery and woe, but bring something good to the table. -- And one more thing about salt...literal salt...one of the
most important minerals we have...is made up of sodium which is very poisonous, and chlorine which is also very poisonous, but mixed together they form salt which is a necessity of life. There is a lesson in that. Do you see it?

**Conclusion**: What we really are talking about is living life positively...accentuating the positives and minimizing the negatives. Maybe we should reconsider the oft used expression, “I’m having a bad day.” Maybe we should say something like, “I’m not having as good a day as yesterday, but it still is good.” -- **How are things going?...No complaints. I’m blessed. Its all good.**