

Better Things

by Bryan Gibson

We like to compare things—this team is better than that team; this restaurant is better than that one, etc. Often times, we're just expressing an opinion or a personal taste; we really don't have enough information to be certain. But if God says one thing is better than another, there's no room for argument. God does make statements like these, primarily in the books of Psalms, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. These are extremely profitable to us, because they help us set our priorities; they help us to see what is truly important. Let's take a look at some of them.

Many things are better than riches—the law of God (Psalms 119:72); knowledge, wisdom, and understanding (Proverbs 3:13-14; 8:10-11, 19; 16:16); a good name (Proverbs 22:1; Ecclesiastes 7:1); and virtues such as righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, and gentleness (1 Timothy 6:10-11). Moses certainly understood this, because he chose the riches of God over the riches of Egypt (Hebrews 11:24-26).

The poor man, who has the above things, is better off than the rich man who does not (Psalms 37:16; Proverbs 15:16-17; 16:8, 19; 17:1; 28:6; Eccl. 4:6). Don't envy the rich man too much, especially if he's had to sacrifice these better things to get where he is now.

What you have now (materially speaking) is better than what you hope to have one day (Ecclesiastes 6:9). Sometimes we can't enjoy what we have now for thinking about what we would like to have. Why keep postponing happiness?

It is better to trust in God than to trust in man (Psalms 118:8-9; 146:3-7). Lots of folks discover this the hard way, after they've been led astray. Sadly, some won't discover it until the day of judgment.

It is better not to make a promise, than to make a promise and not keep it (Ecclesiastes 5:2-5). Too many broken promises and there goes our good name. God is clear: don't make promises you can't keep.

A love that rebukes is better than a love that ignores faults (Proverbs 27:5; Ecclesiastes 7:5). We need friends who will tell it like it is, friends who love us enough to point out our wrongs. Jesus said, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten" (Revelation 3:19).

Ruling your spirit is better than ruling a city (Proverbs 16:32). We tend to glorify the physically strong; God does just the opposite. It takes more strength to conquer oneself than to conquer others.

It is better to go to the house of mourning (a funeral) than the house of feasting (a party), for it is in the house of mourning that we learn the most valuable lessons (Ecclesiastes 7:2-4). It's hard to go there and not think about the brevity and uncertainty of life.

The end of a thing is better than its beginning—so be patient (Ecclesiastes 7:8). This certainly applies to childrearing. Sometimes we give up too soon, when we don't see any immediate effects of our teaching and discipline. Hebrews 12:11 should help us here: "Now no

chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.” This principle also applies to prayer—sometimes we have to “wait on the Lord” (Isaiah 40:27-31).

Two are better than one, so value your friends, your marriage companion, your family, your fellow-Christians (Ecclesiastes 4:7-12; Song of Solomon 8:7; Proverbs 17:17; 27:9; 31:10-12). Imagine life without the love and support of others. Not a pretty picture, is it?