

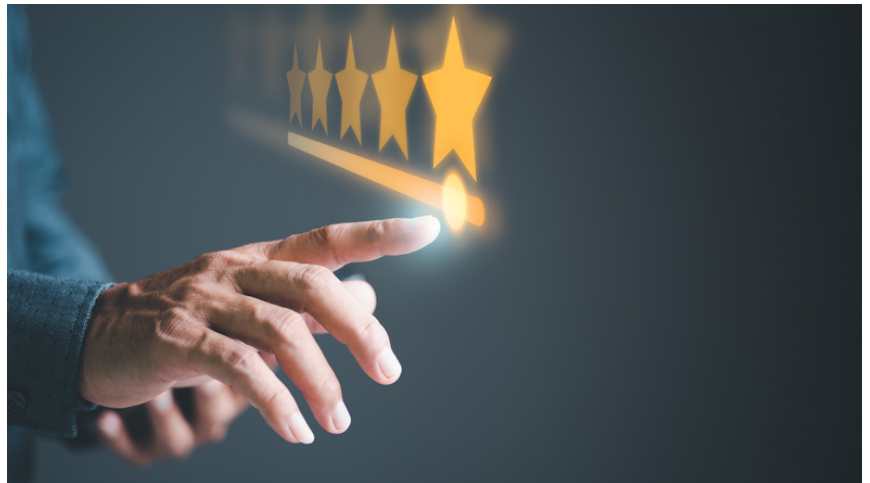
## Ecclesiastes 7:1 (NKJV)

<sup>1</sup> A good name is better than precious ointment, and *the day of death than the day of one's birth*.

## Ecclesiastes 7:8 (NKJV)

<sup>8</sup> *The end of a thing is better than its beginning*; the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.

Many preachers use this phrase in reference to eternal salvation, affirming that the end of a person is what counts when it comes to salvation. In other words, they are trying to say that the state of people at their death decides their eternal destiny. What they mean is the



following: “Born-again Christians may have all kinds of sinful fallouts during their lifetime that would potentially make them lose their salvation if they were to die in those moments, but if they manage to have a good name and reputation in the eyes of people, at the end of their lives, if they have enough good works done, and all of their sins confessed when they die, then we can be sure they were saved.” This implies that our eternal salvation continuously fluctuates and it’s always in jeopardy of being lost, so we must make every effort to make sure we end well, whatever that “well” means. Now let’s see if this is true. The only texts I found in the Bible in the vicinity of this idea are verses 1 and 8 from Ecclesiastes 7, which I’ve just read.

First and foremost, let’s notice that neither one of the texts don’t say the end of a person is what counts, but the day of death is better than the day of birth, and the end of a thing is better than its beginning. It’s just a comparison between the beginning and the end of a person or a thing. Second, the passages don’t say that only the end of a person or a thing

matters, as if the beginning is not important, but instead say that the end is just better. However, beginnings have their value as well.

Third, these Old Testament passages were written by King Solomon before the cross and before salvation coming to light. Moreover, in the immediate context of these verses—that is, in the whole of Chapter 7, in the verses before and after—there is no indication or hint to make us believe these texts can be applied to salvation in general, or to eternal security, in the sense that the good works of Christians gathered at the end of their lives count, to be sure that they were saved. How can anyone measure the good works, or to know if they are enough in front of God to save someone, besides the sacrifice of Jesus?

These verses talk about perseverance and patience in all things. Any beginning in any area is full of excitement and anticipation but is also more difficult because you don't see any significant results or rewards immediately. However, if you have enough patience and persevere through all the obstacles to the end, then the end of that thing will give you more satisfaction. For example, Jesus could endure the cross and all the shame because He looked at the joy He would have at the end of all His sufferings (Hebrews 12:2). Even in agriculture, the time of sowing is more difficult and less satisfying than the harvest. Moreover, when you go to school and prepare for life, school is not always pleasant, but if you persevere and finish it, and then you have a job with a good income or start a business, you have much more satisfaction than when you were doing courses and learning. Another illustration is building a house. It's one thing when you start it and another thing when it's finished. And the same principle applies to any area or thing.

The second part of Verse 8 tells us that when we are at the beginning of a thing, and it's hard, to look with patience at its finality, encourage ourselves, and move forward because the end is better than the beginning. Another interesting thing is that if we think about the end of Jesus Christ Himself here on earth at the cross as a criminal, it was a shameful end from the point of view of the disciples and of the people living in His time. Even my son, when he was just four years old, and I told him Jesus always overcame, he said that He lost in one thing when He was on earth. I asked him, "Where did Jesus lose?" He answered, "He lost when He died on the cross." I had to explain to him that Jesus didn't lose but won the biggest

battle in human history. What I am trying to say here is that what we consider from the outside as the end of a person (good or bad) can be very relative because only God knows man's heart.

And, as you probably already know by now, salvation is not dependent on believers' good works or reputation but only on the innocent blood of Jesus.

Along the same lines, there is one more passage worth mentioning here, and that is Hebrews 13:7, which says the following:

Hebrews 13:7 (NKJV)

<sup>7</sup> Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the Word of God. *Consider the outcome of their way of life*, and imitate their faith.

In some languages, like Romanian, for example, the phrase "consider the outcome of their way of life" is translated in such a way that most believers understand it this way: "look carefully at the way of their life when they were at the end of their life and follow their faith!" Because of this faulty translation, many believers think their behavioral state at the moment when life ends is very important and decisive in their eternal destiny. However, as all English translations show, the text encourages us to evaluate the end of their WAY of life, meaning the good result or effect of their way of life in faith, and not the end of their life.

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