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THE HOUSE OF MOURNING

“A good name is better than a good ointment, and the day of one’s death is better than the day of one’s birth. It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, because that is the end of every man, and the living takes it to heart. Sorrow is better than laughter, for when a face is sad a heart may be happy. The mind of the wise is in the house of mourning, while the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure,” Ecclesiastes 7:1-4. It seems like I’ve spent a good bit of time in the house of mourning lately. I can honestly say it would feel much better to see those I care about laughing, smiling, enjoying the simple pleasures of life and celebrating the triumphs of well earned victories. When I went to visit my good friend of 30 years in Tennessee, I was struck by the fact that this would be unlike

any time I had ever spent with him. Truthfully, I’ve never laughed harder in my laugh than the times I’ve spent with him. Sharing a mutual joy and common love of all things comical and silly, it was hard not to have memories flooded with all the hilarious moments we’ve shared together as I made my way to the calling hours for his 9 year old daughter who had passed away. Instead of laughing the hardest in my life with him, we would both break down and sob, mourning and crying the hardest I ever have with him. It is certainly not the way either of us would have preferred to experience a reunion together after 10 years since seeing each other. Yet, the scripture teaches that under these circumstances, this is the most meaningful way to spend time in each other’s company. Solomon reminds us that the

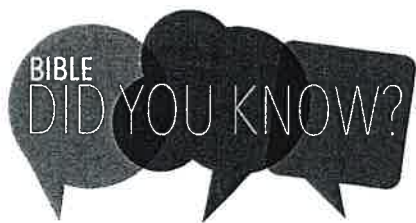
day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth because "the end of a matter is better than its beginning," Ecclesiastes 7:8. While there is so much to joyfully and wonderfully experience in this life, the reality is that it is full of suffering and pain and struggle and those who pass on from this existence are truly being freed from the enslavement to heartache, pain and sadness. Paul reminds us that the creation itself which has been subjected to a period of corruption after the entrance of sin is waiting in anticipation of the new heavens and earth to be finally released from its present state. "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the

first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body," Romans 8:18-23. While the house of mourning is filled with such sadness and painful loss, it is a time of serious reflection where wisdom teaches us that the end of life is actually better as it finally reaches a physical redemption from the ongoing life of suffering. "And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; for the first things have passed away,'" Revelation 21:3-4. While we are certainly grateful for the blessings we enjoy in this life and seek to live life to the fullest, death is a reminder that God seeks the fullest blessings and richest joys and pleasures to be experienced on the other side of this life with Him, where He can provide the most excellent blessings totally free of any threat of harm or pain or loss. Sorrow is indeed better than laughter, for when a

face is sad a heart may be happy. We rejoice for those souls who are enjoying a pain free state of existence and remind ourselves that this is the end of all of us that we might take it to heart. It is a time to examine our lives and question whether we truly seek after God in such a way that ensures we will receive an eternal state of blessing after death. Jesus reminds us if we truly are not seeking Him now in this life, we will fail to receive the eternal blessings of boundless joy in the next life. "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and will then repay every man according to his deeds," Matthew 16:24-27. As children of God faithfully following Jesus our Savior, we are reminded that through His powerful resurrection from the grave and our subsequent obedience to the gospel living in hope of a future resurrection from death, we may face death

in hope and victory rather than defeat and loss. "For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Corinthians 15:53-57.

– Daniel Ruegg

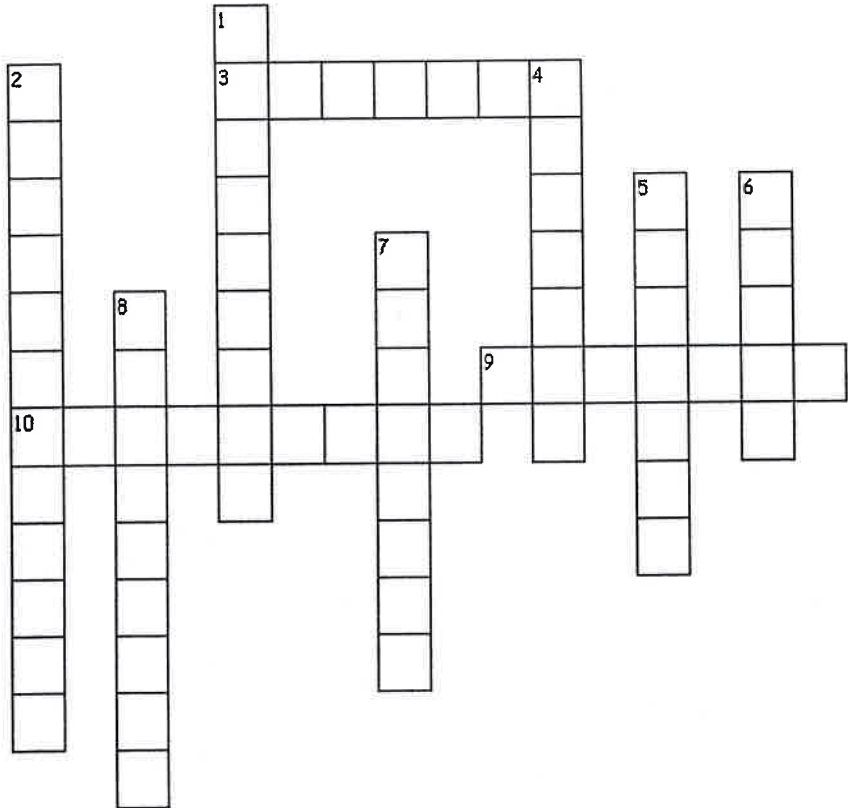


"Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs, rather than a fool in his folly. He who returns evil for good, evil will not depart from his house. The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so abandon the quarrel before it breaks out."

Proverbs 17:12-14

The

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ACROSS

3. Paul counted the loss of all things but _____ in view of Christ. (Philip. 3:8)
 9. Even though persecuted, Paul chose to _____. (Philip. 2:17)
 10. Paul said stand firm and not be alarmed by _____. (Philip. 1:27-28)

DOWN

1. We are to do all things without _____ or disputing. (Philip. 2:14)
 2. Paul's _____ brought further progress for the gospel. (Philip. 1:12-13)
 4. Jesus _____ Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death. (Philip. 2:8)
 5. Paul hoped to send _____ to Philippi to learn of their condition. (Philip. 2:19)
 6. Praying about everything brings the _____ of God. (Philip. 4:6-7)
 7. Some preached selfishly to cause Paul _____. (Philip. 1:17)
 8. Regard others as more _____ than yourself. (Philip. 2:3)