

A Good Name

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[0:00] Please turn with me in your Bibles to Proverbs 10 this afternoon. We've been away from the Proverbs for some time on our fellowship lunch Sundays, in fact since January.

! It's the last time we looked at the Proverbs during this afternoon service, but we return to them again in Proverbs 10. I want you to think with me for a moment on what the following names have in common.

George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, John Calvin, John Bunyan, Charles Spurgeon, the Apostle Paul, Mary, the mother of Jesus, Jesus himself.

What do you think of when you hear those names? Is your memory of those people a good one or a bad one? Do you think favorably of them or not favorably? What about these names?

Osama Bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Judas Iscariot. What do you think when you hear those names?

[1:14] Is your memory of them good or bad, positive or negative, favorable or unfavorable? What about your name?

What will people think when they hear your name after you've died? When you're gone, your name is mentioned. What will people think?

Which list of people will you fall into? The first one or the second one? Will you be remembered well? You may not be as broadly known and famous as some of these people.

But to those who do remember you, will it be a glad memory or a painful one? Will you be remembered at all? Likely, most of you would like to have people remember you fondly.

To think good things about you when your name is mentioned. You'd like to be in the first list and not the second. When people mention your name once you've gone. And that's a good desire if it's rightly motivated.

[2:17] When you die, you must leave a good name behind as a testimony of what God has done in you through Christ. Not surprisingly, God's Word has something to say about what people think about you when you're gone.

It's here in Proverbs 10. Notice verse 7 with me. The memory of the righteous will be a blessing. But the name of the wicked will rot.

The memory of the righteous, a blessing. The name of the wicked, rot. Decay. The one is good, the other is not.

I want to see, first of all, this afternoon, that a good name is worth having. It's worth pursuing. It's worth possessing. And then we'll talk about how you have a good name. If you want to have a good name, you'd be righteous.

And if you want to have a name that will rot, you'd be wicked. But first, a good name is something that is worth having. And maybe some of you think, should I really be concerned with what other people think about me? Aren't you the one that always says, don't be concerned about the opinions of men?

[3:25] Well, yes, I have said that. And at one level, yes, we shouldn't be concerned about the opinions of men. When we worry about whether they will like us or not. When their opinions control our behavior. When their opinions run contrary to what God thinks.

When the opinions of men become more important to you than the favor of God. Then no, you shouldn't seek the favor of men and be concerned with their opinion. If that's what we mean by finding favor with men, then it's not something to be pursuing.

It's something to be avoided altogether. Charles Bridges, when he talks about this verse, says, It is not the popular voice. So different is God's standards from man's.

That to have all men speak well of us would be a bad name. And if all of the worldly people around you, Oh, we really like him because he's just like us. Then that's not what we're talking about. That's not the good name you want to be well thought of by all of your worldly friends.

Because you're just like them. But there is a sense in which having a good name is vitally important for the Christian. Not for our own sake.

[4:28] So that others will think well of us. But so that God will be well thought of. So that God will be praised. And the wise man makes this point. Proverbs 22. A good name is more desirable than great riches.

To be esteemed is better than silver or gold. This is the same Solomon that tells us we shouldn't be proud. And seek the favor of men. And he says to be esteemed is better than silver and gold. To have a good name.

Better than riches. And when Solomon wants us to tell us how important something is, he compares it to riches. 1616. How much better to get wisdom than gold? To choose understanding than silver? And we know that wisdom is important. Understanding is important. So is a good name. So is a favorable reputation. If you don't have a good name, you don't have much in the world.

You should be known for not being friends with the world, but for your honesty, your integrity, your fairness, your holiness. It should be known that if you give your word to someone, it's good.

[5:25] It will be done. If you say you'll be there, you will be. You can be trusted. You can be looked to as a role model for holiness. A life of following God. And while your good name and what others think of you is not your primary goal, anyone who has the Bible for their standards should think highly of you because you live by that standard.

And in that sense, your aim is to have a good name. Ecclesiastes 7.1. A good name is better than fine perfume. It's better than riches. And when kept in proper perspective, it's not a matter of pride. It's not seeking your own praise. It means that you've lived a life that is worthy of praise. Your goal is not to be praised. Your goal should be to live in such a way that you deserve it.

That you're worthy of it. Because that will mean you've lived a life that's pleasing to God. One of the marks of a faithful minister who certainly should not be consumed with what people think about him is that he keeps a good reputation with outsiders.

1 Timothy 3.7. Or 2 Corinthians 8.21. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord, but also in the eyes of men.

[6:42] People are to be able to see that we do what is right. And in that sense, we are to have a good name. If we have a bad name before men, it reflects poorly on our God, on Christ our Savior.

So we must have a good name, a good reputation as followers of Christ. Not bring shame to the name of Christ, but honor to his name because we've maintained a good testimony.

And so if that's the case, then how can we have a good name? We're told right here in verse 7 of Proverbs 10. The memory of the righteous will be blessed. If you're righteous, you'll have a good name.

Your memory will be blessed. And we've been talking about your name now while you're alive. This verse seems to indicate more once you're gone. What will people think about you? The memory of you will be a blessing if you've been righteous.

And the question then is, are you righteous? What does a righteous person look like? If I look at you, if someone else looks at you, do they see a righteous person? What should we look for if we're looking for that?

[7:36] Well, first of all, it's a person of faith. Someone who trusts in Christ. What did we just hear about? What did we sing about? It's not our own righteousness that saves us. Salvation is something that we receive only by faith.

And so a righteous person is a person of faith. One who is trusted in Christ for their righteousness. Because if it was our own righteousness, we know that there's no one righteous. Not even one. But when we put our faith in Christ, His righteousness is credited to us.

We're right in God's eyes. And so a righteous person is marked by faith in Christ. Don't ever read the Proverbs without Christ. Not very far from your mind. When you think about a righteous person, don't just think about somebody that does good things.

Think about someone that trusts in Christ. Christ is their hope. There's an entire chapter of Hebrews given over to remembering. To the memory of Old Testament saints.

And what are they remembered for? Their faith. It's what marked them out as righteous individuals. Their faith. Hebrews 11.2. This is what the ancients were commended for.

[8:39] They are remembered. Their memory is a blessing because they had faith. They trusted Christ. But a person who has faith also lives a life that's pleasing to God. Christ begins to work in us by His Spirit.

Holiness. Lightness to Himself. And so a righteous person is marked by a life of good deeds. Love for the brethren. A love for the truth. And that will be seen. And so Paul says to the Romans in chapter 12, Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.

Part of a righteous life is not just doing right, but doing right so that it might be seen. So that you can keep a good testimony.

A good name. And only a person of faith will be able to live this sort of life. Jesus said, In the same way, Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works.

And praise your Father in heaven. It's God that we want to have a good name. Not so much ourselves. One of the ways God gets a good name is if we, His people, have a good name.

[9:39] If we have kept ourselves pure. If we have kept ourselves from hypocrisy and bringing shame on the name of Christ, then that brings glory to God's name. And that is our aim. Instead of bringing shame.

We're to live rightly. And when we do, other people will notice. Psalm 112 and verse 6. A righteous man will be remembered forever. So are you a righteous person today?

If so, if you're trusting in Christ and He's working His grace in you to bring about good works in your life, then your memory will be a blessed one. Others will be able to look back at your life and take notes and say, this is what I learned from this person.

He was always faithful. He was always honest. They'll be able to look at your life and learn from it. They'll be able to take comfort and encouragement from others who have gone before and faced similar circumstances.

He says, I remember when He went through that. What a testimony He maintained. I will be able to do the same by God's grace. Their memory will be a blessing to you. And aren't the pages of Scripture full of those who are remembered?

[10:41] And who are remembered by us as having done good things, lived for the Lord. And who are remembered in their own day as righteous people. Think of Josiah, the righteous king. He finds the law and it's read to him.

And as we heard in Sunday school, he tears his robes because they're no longer keeping the law and he brings Israel back or Judah back to obedience to the law. And when he dies, we read in 2 Chronicles 35, all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him.

Jeremiah composed laments for Josiah. And to this day, all the men and the women singers commemorate Josiah in their laments. When he died, he was missed. They loved him. He was even commemorated in song.

Anybody going to write a song about you when you're gone? Singing about you? Because they missed you so much? Because there is something so remarkable? Well, we don't have Jeremiah to do that. But will you be remembered like Josiah was?

Will people be sad that you're gone? Because you're a righteous person. David, the man after God's own heart, and that's how he's remembered. We often remember the worst about people.

[11:47] We remember David and Bathsheba. But often that's not what the Scriptures point us to. They remind us that David is the man after God's own heart. And all of the kings after David in Judah are compared to him.

King Amaziah, for example. He becomes king, and he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, but not as his father David had done. David is the gold standard. His name is remembered well. The memory of him is a blessing.

Will you be remembered that way? Will other people compare themselves to you like they did to David? That shouldn't be your goal. I want everybody to be compared to me, but I want to live such a life that is holy that people will remember.

And I have a good name. Do you remember what Jesus said about the woman who anointed his feet with oil? Does she have a good memory?

Is the memory of her a blessing? Do we think well of her when we think of that woman? We remember that she was a sinner, but we remember that she received great grace. And she

anointed her Savior's feet when others were concerned about other lesser trivial things.

[12:52] She's concerned with her Savior. And what does Jesus say? I tell you the truth, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.

And we remember her, don't we? Because Jesus wanted her to be remembered because of her faithfulness, her good deed that she did. You remember Dorcas or Tabitha?

Acts 9, verse 36. In Joppa, there was a disciple named Tabitha, which when translated as Dorcas, who was always doing good and helping the poor. Well, Dorcas dies.

And not long after her death, the house is full of widows who had been beneficiaries. They had received her kindness. And you know what they're doing? Have they forgotten about her? Are they cursing the memory of Dorcas?

No, they're bringing the things that she made and they're showing Paul, look what this woman did for me. Look how she helped me. Look what she did for us widows. Their memory was a blessed one.

[13:53] And of course, then Paul raises it from the dead. But she lived in such a way that she had earned a good name, a blessed memory. God Himself is remembered for His good deeds.

Psalms 145, verse 7. They shall eagerly utter the memory of thine abundant goodness and shout joyfully of thy righteousness. Now, God is not dead and we don't remember Him in that way.

But we do remember His good works, all the things that He has done. It is a blessing, is it not? To think what God has done and to think what He can and will do for us. And so I have to ask you, what will people remember about you?

Will your memory be a blessing because you were righteous? First of all, are you trusting in Christ? Will you be remembered for your faith like those in Hebrews 11?

Is your hope of heaven in Christ and in Him alone? If so, people will be able to stand around the funeral home at your visitation when you are gone. And though they mourn and mourn deeply, they will be able to rejoice at the memory of your faith in Christ.

[15:06] Because that will mean you are with Christ at that moment. You trusted Him in your life and He took you home to Him. In death, they'll have good things to say in the midst of their sorrow.

So do you have faith in Christ? And then what are you doing for the good name of Christ? Are you living your life in such a way that you'll be missed when you're gone?

Are you demonstrating love for God and for His people like Dorcas did? Caring for those who are in need? Do you serve them with a willing, humble heart? Are you working to extend the kingdom of Christ?

What a faithful witness He was. What a faithful evangelist. Whatever sphere of influence you have, are you working to shed the light of Christ to them?

What would your co-workers, your classmates, your neighbors say about you when you're gone? About the life that you have lived? Will they remember it? What will they remember about it?

[16:08] If you're a follower of Christ, you must be living for Him. And if you are, you'll be remembered for it. Will Christ be the thing that you're remembered for?

They were a Christian. Whether they're cursing your name because you were a Christian and it exposed their sin or that memory is a blessing because they love Christ too. Will Christ be the thing that's remembered about you?

Will they look back and say, that man, that woman certainly loved Jesus. He was living for something very clearly besides this world. He wasn't tangled up with all the things of the world. That wasn't his concern. That wasn't her concern.

And it was obvious by the way he lived. He loved his Lord. That's the kind of change Jesus works in those who trust in Him. I hope that if you profess faith in Christ today that you're not bringing shame to His name by the way you live.

How will you be remembered? One other thought before we move on to the wicked whose name will rot. I noted with David that our tendency is often to think the worst of people.

[17:10] to remember the bad things about them. Whether it's the mundane. That's the guy that fell out of his chair in class. We remember the bad things that happened. The foolish things that they've done.

Or the really bad things. He's the guy that cheated on his wife. As David is often remembered.

We're so good at remembering our friends, our spouse's wrongdoings. And then bringing them up at key moments.

Oh yeah, well, remember when you did whatever. We're good at that, aren't we? Remembering the bad. But we should think of this verse when we're tempted to remember the worst about people. Is this a righteous person? Is their faith in Christ? Not are they perfect? No one will be this side of heaven. But are they trusting in Christ? Are they seeking to live their life in conformity with His will? Is the general pattern of their life one of righteousness and holiness? Then we should remember them as they'll be remembered when they die as a blessing. Not as a curse. Not always thinking the worst of people.

[18:12] The memory of the righteous is a blessing. Make certain that it is for you when you remember the people around you. So if you want your name to be remembered, your memory to be a blessing, you must be a righteous person who trusts in Christ.

But then, if you're wicked, your name will rot. I love how Scripture doesn't pull any punches. It just calls a spade a spade.

Your name will rot. What is a wicked person? That's the opposite of the righteous. It's someone who doesn't trust in Christ. You don't see a need for Christ. Or if you do, you ignore it.

And so your life shows that you're not living for Christ. You're not living for His Word. According to His Word, you're living for this world. Your concern is with the opinion of men. You care more about what they think than what God thinks when you think of having a good name, you want all your buddies to say, He's just like us.

Your good name isn't so that Christ will have a good name. You live for yourself, your pleasure, according to your rules. And people notice. The world takes you in and righteous people mourn and pray for you.

[19:22] The world, while not appreciating your dishonesty, your infidelity, they do give you a good name for joining in with their wicked behavior, their blasphemy of Christ. You have the favor of people you shouldn't have the favor of.

Maybe you're not quite so outwardly wicked. You seem like a good person, but you still don't trust in Christ. You don't have faith. You take all the credit for yourself. I am a good person. And you do want a good name so that people will praise you, not so that they'll praise your Savior.

That's a more subtle form of wickedness because on the outside it looks pretty good, but it's still just as wicked. If your hope isn't in Christ, you think that your goodness will get you to glory.

You're good and you love the praises that it brings you. Oh, he's a good kid. He's a good student, a hard worker. We love him and you love it when people say that. But you're still wicked if the glory does not go to God.

What will come of you? Your name will rot. Your memory will not be a blessed one. It will be a sad, tragic, painful one. Think of a dead animal.

[20:31] You know the smell. The stench. How when you can't find the source of it, it drives you crazy because it stinks so bad that it can make you sick to your stomach. And so you try to find, is it in the yard?

Is it in the trash? Is it under the house? Is it in the walls? Is it in the walls? Because it's so pervasive and so inescapable. That's what your memory will be like to people.

Like the stench of a dead animal in their nose. It's not a pretty picture that's painted here for us. Rot is not good. It's wasting away. It's decay. And that's what your name will do.

Matthew Henry says, when their bodies are putrefying in the grave, their names also shall rot.

Everybody here is going to die, be buried in the ground, and all of our bodies will rot and decay.

But some people here will have a name that lives on, a memory that's a blessing. But others here, along with your rotting corpse in the ground, will have a rotting, stinking name. It's not pleasant language, but it is the truth of Scripture.

[21:42] You can think of the kings again as David was the standard for righteousness in Judah. Jeroboam was the standard for wicked kings in Israel. He set up places for false worship and all subsequent kings are measured against his wickedness.

And so when a new king takes the throne in Israel, we read something like this, he did evil in the eyes of the Lord, walking in the ways of Jeroboam. And in his sin, which he had caused Israel to commit, his name was rotting.

It wasn't a pleasant memory. And what a sad thing. We talked about Josiah and how people lamented him, how they wrote songs for him, and how he was commemorated. And then comes Josiah's son, Jehoiaikim.

And what do we read about Jehoiakim? Jeremiah 22, 18-19. Is he like his dad? Is he remembered? Is he commemorated? Our song sung for him? Jeremiah 22, 18-19.

Therefore, this is what the Lord says about Jehoiakim, son of Josiah, king of Judah. They will not mourn for him. Alas, my brother. Alas, my sister.

[22 : 46] They will not mourn for him. Alas, my master. Alas, his splendor. He will have the burial of a donkey dragged away and thrown outside the gates of Jerusalem. That's what was remembered of Jehoiakim.

He would be dragged and thrown outside the gates like a dead donkey. And guess what a dead donkey thrown outside the gates is going to do? It's going to rot. It's going to stink. That's what happened to Jehoiakim in his name.

And I fear that this is where some of you are headed. You might be remembered, but it will be for all the wrong reasons. When you die, your parents, your family, maybe a spouse, loved ones will think of you and they will weep.

Because they know that by your wicked life, you're now suffering in hell. You had no faith in Christ. So there's no hope for eternity.

And others who don't care as much about you will just shake their heads and think how you wasted your life. It's your visitation at the funeral home as people mill about. They'll struggle to know what to say because there's not anything good to say.

[24 : 01] They won't be able to say he's in a better place now because you won't be. Don't be that person. Don't waste your life living for yourself, living for pleasure, living for the favor of the world.

Whatever pleasure that you think that kind of life will bring you will be temporary and not nearly as satisfying as you think it will be. And the torment that it brings for eternity will be far worse than anything you imagine it to be.

But the thing is today, that can be avoided. Your name doesn't have to rot. People don't have to think about you like they did about wicked men that have gone before.

If you would but come and trust in this Savior, Jesus Christ, you can have His righteousness. And you can begin to live for Him. And what people will remember about you is the radical change. He was on his way to hell, but what a trophy of grace. God took him or her and He saved him. And your memory will be a blessing because you're a person of faith. Even late in life, you can turn around and have people remember you well if you would but follow Christ.

[25 : 20] So come to Him now while there is time, while there is still hope for you. You can trust in this Jesus so that you too might have a memory that will be blessed. I want you to for a moment imagine yourself at your own funeral visitation.

There you are, lying in the casket. What are the people saying about you as they stand around and talk?

What are they remembering about your life? What are they saying? Are they rejoicing? That you're in glory because you trusted Christ?

Or are they mourning that they'll spend an eternity apart from you because you're in eternal torment? What will your memory be?

A blessing? Or will your name rot? How will people remember you? What will they think about you? May God help us to live in such a way that we'll be remembered well.

[26 : 29] Not for our sake, but for His glory. Well, as we close, we want to sing together. Father, in my life, Lord, be glorified.

In my home, Lord. In my church, Lord. We want God to be glorified in us. When people see us, we want Him to receive the glory. We want to have that kind of good name so that God will have a good name.

Let's pray. Our Father, we pray that You would be glorified by the way that we live. We pray that we might have a good name, a blessed memory so that You will have a good name so that no shame will be brought to the name of Christ.

We pray that we would be remembered well for Your sake. And we pray for those that have not put their hope and trust in Christ, who are not righteous because of what Christ has done.

Would You come and open their eyes? Make them to see what will be remembered of them that their name will rot except they come to Jesus. And so we pray that You would draw them in today.

[27 : 36] Show them their sin, their need of the Savior, and then cause them to cry out in faith, to receive Jesus with that open hand, to fall into His arms.

Save sinners in our midst this day. Make us then a blessing to those around us. Make us to have a good name so that Christ might have a good name in the earth, we pray in Jesus' name.
Amen.