

# A Fleeting Future?

*Ecclesiastes 9*

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

- No North Campus service today.
  - Men's retreat next weekend so no men's breakfast.
  - **Save the Date:** July 14th church picnic and baptism
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## INTRO

Today is Mother's Day. In the early 20th century in America, Mother's Day became an annual tradition, starting mainly in churches, to honor mothers and their contribution to the framework of society and the church.

- Enough can't be said about the foundational need of mothers who view their unique, God-created function as females to bring forth new life, nurture, instruct, discipline, and model godliness to their children. In a time and culture when motherhood is discouraged by many as something that shackles and limits women from their potential, it's refreshing to still have a day that celebrates the special and worthy calling of a mother.
- Motherhood is full of joys and sorrows, elation and grief, pressing in and letting go, and it takes a lot of selfless sacrifice, investment, and intentionality. Today, we acknowledge and celebrate moms; not perfect moms, for no such thing exists, but we honor mothers and the investments they have made.

When discussing this day, there needs to be acknowledgment of a couple of other important factors:

1. There are some who desire motherhood but, for various reasons, have not been able to experience that desire. Be it from a physical condition or a miscarriage; it can be a heartbreaking journey for a woman to walk through the desire of motherhood without fulfillment. And I want to acknowledge that the Lord sees and values you, just as you are. He knows the desire of your heart and does not see you as anything less than His daughter. His heart and intentions for you are good, even as you walk through a season of pain, difficulty, or question marks. Rest in His love, and continue to pour those mothering instincts into the lives of those whom God has placed within your path.
2. There might be those today who have lost children or those who have lost mothers, and the sting of that loss today hurts. I pray that today you will experience the peace that passes, understanding that only Jesus can give you as you remember, mourn, and celebrate the memory of that life that is no longer with you on this earth.
3. Finally, not all mother/child relationships are positive or helpful. We are born into human relationships, which means that sometimes, the sin of humanity brings more pain than pleasure into our closest relationships. Some mothers, perhaps even hearing this today, have abandoned their responsibilities, abused their children, or have simply not known how to be present and invested as mothers. To you, I can confidently say one thing: Where there is still life, and where there is still God, there is still hope. You might need to repent, humble yourself, or get the counseling and training you need to make the future different from the past, but many things are possible with faith and humility.
4. Some are on the opposite end of the spectrum. You may be a son or a daughter that has strayed from the path of righteousness. You may be the source of pain in a mother's life because of rebellion, hatred, addiction, or pride. My advice to you is the same. You'll never be able to start to mend the relational divide created by sin until you first make things right with your Creator. Surrender to His truth and conviction, and allow His grace to mend your heart.

I didn't mean to make that heavier than it needed to be, but things are not always cut and dry. Things are complicated in human relationships, but God's truth is still a rock upon which we can stand. So, happy Mother's Day. Mom, we honor and celebrate you! Let's pray.

## **Acknowledge Ashley and Mom**

**BIBLE PASSAGE****Ecclesiastes 9:1-18 (NKJV - New King James Version)**

<sup>1</sup> For I considered all this in my heart, so that I could declare it all: that the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God. People know neither love nor hatred by anything they see before them.

<sup>2</sup> All things come alike to all: One event happens to the righteous and the wicked; To the good, the clean, and the unclean; To him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As is the good, so is the sinner; He who takes an oath as he who fears an oath.

<sup>3</sup> This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing happens to all. Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

<sup>4</sup> But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

<sup>5</sup> For the living know that they will die; But the dead know nothing, And they have no more reward, For the memory of them is forgotten.

<sup>6</sup> Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished; Nevermore will they have a share In anything done under the sun.

<sup>7</sup> Go, eat your bread with joy, And drink your wine with a merry heart; For God has already accepted your works.

<sup>8</sup> Let your garments always be white, And let your head lack no oil.

<sup>9</sup> Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun.

<sup>10</sup> Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.

<sup>11</sup> I returned and saw under the sun that— The race is not to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong, Nor bread to the wise, Nor riches to men of understanding, Nor favor to men of skill; But time and chance happen to them all.

<sup>12</sup> For man also does not know his time: Like fish taken in a cruel net, Like birds caught in a snare, So the sons of men are snared in an evil time, When it falls suddenly upon them.

<sup>13</sup> This wisdom I have also seen under the sun, and it seemed great to me:

<sup>14</sup> There was a little city with few men in it; and a great king came against it, besieged it, and built great snares around it.

<sup>15</sup> Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that same poor man.

<sup>16</sup> Then I said: "Wisdom is better than strength. Nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, And his words are not heard.

<sup>17</sup> Words of the wise, spoken quietly, should be heard Rather than the shout of a ruler of fools.

<sup>18</sup> Wisdom is better than weapons of war; But one sinner destroys much good."

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## THE CERTAINTY OF DEATH AND THE UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE

### Listen to something for a moment.

Like music note played, but no one can see the score, such is life. The only thing we know is that the song of life under the sun will eventually end.

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## BIBLE PASSAGE

### Ecclesiastes 9:1 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>1</sup> For I considered all this in my heart, so that I could declare it all: that the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God. People know neither love nor hatred by anything they see before them.

## APPLICATION

You can't seek divine affirmation of your wise or foolish life simply by how life seems to be going.

- You can't assess, "I have a steady flow of wealth and health; therefore, God is showing my favor by appraising my lifestyle choices."
- You cannot say, "I must be in sin or doing something wrong because life is really hard; I can't seem to get ahead; God must really be angry at me."

We also can't judge God by our circumstances:

- God must hate me because things are bad, or God must love me because things are good. God chastens those he loves.

**[Jhn 9:1-3 NKJV] [1] Now as Jesus passed by, He saw a man who was blind from birth. [2] And His disciples asked Him, saying, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" [3] Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him.**

Solomon suggests that no one, not even the wise and the righteous, can know and understand what will come in their future from the hand of God, whether it will be good or difficult.

- Now, looking at life above the sun, we know that God works out ALL things for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purposes. But we want to be careful not to falsely assume that we understand why God allows certain adversities or blessings in our lives.

This is why it's always important not to judge our spirituality based on feelings or circumstances but based on truth. If we allow God's Word to be a lamp unto our feet and light unto our path, we can walk confidently in the good times and the difficult.

## BIBLE PASSAGE

**Ecclesiastes 9:2-3 (NKJV - New King James Version)**

<sup>2</sup> All things come alike to all: One event happens to the righteous and the wicked; To the good, the clean, and the unclean; To him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As is the good, so is the sinner; He who takes an oath as he who fears an oath.

<sup>3</sup> This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing happens to all. Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.

## APPLICATION

Next, Solomon continues his train of thought: just as it seems one cannot ensure physical good or evil in life by living rightly or wickedly, one cannot escape the reality of death by their goodness or wickedness.

He contrasts two kinds of people that he observes on earth:

- The moral and the immoral
- the religious and the irreligious
- The obedient and the rebellious
- One one with serious and the wreckless
- The one who takes their commitments seriously and the one who is quick to break a promise.

In verse 3, the true statement is made that the sons of men are full of evil: the religious still have evil hearts. The moral still have evil hearts.

## APPLICATION

The big question Solomon is trying to tackle is, ***"What is then the benefit of living rightly or wrongly if it doesn't ensure more blessings in this life, and life ends the same no matter what you do or don't do?"***

- He will later conclude that even though you don't know what will happen in your life, and even though you will die, if you live one day at a time, and enjoy what's in front of you, then life won't seem like such a waste. There is "under the sun" truth in that statement. Jesus said:

**[Mat 6:34 NKJV] [34] "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."**

But right before that, Jesus said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added to you."

In other words, the "under the sun" mentality is: "Eat, drink, and be merry while you have the chance in this short, unpredictable life." Above the sun, we learn to remember that there is an eternal destination for our souls and a God that we will stand before and give an account.

Warren Wiersbe sums it up nicely:

#### QUOTE

**“Yes, we share a common destiny on earth—death and the grave—but we do not share a common destiny in eternity**

Warren Wiersbe, *Be Satisfied* (p. 107). Victor Books.

#### BIBLE PASSAGE

### Luke 12:16-21 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>16</sup> Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.

<sup>17</sup> And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?'

<sup>18</sup> So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.

<sup>19</sup> And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." '

<sup>20</sup> But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'

<sup>21</sup> “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

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## BIBLE PASSAGE

### Ecclesiastes 9:4-6 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>4</sup> But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

<sup>5</sup> For the living know that they will die; But the dead know nothing, And they have no more reward, For the memory of them is forgotten.

<sup>6</sup> Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished; Nevermore will they have a share In anything done under the sun.

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## APPLICATION

Since Solomon is observing things from a temporal perspective, he states that even if your life stinks, it's still better to be alive and miserable than to be dead.

### “Better a living dog than a dead lion.”

- Dogs were not household pets in that day, they were scavengers and detested animals.
- Here he gives a little proverb. On one side you have the king of the jungle, the **mighty lion [image]**. On the other side you have a mangy mutt who **scavenges [image] the allies**. The lion is dead and the dog is alive. Which body would you choose to be put into?

Solomon observes that as long as you're still alive, there is still hope: hope that things may improve, hope that tomorrow might be better than today, and hope that there's a good season ahead of you.

- When you're dead, all the things you were living for won't really matter anymore—who you loved, who you hated, and all the things your heart wanted to get.. There seems



to be a finality to death that nags at those who are living "under the sun."

The beauty of living above the sun is that even if the world forgets you after you die, there is a God who will remember you for all eternity.

#### BIBLE PASSAGE

**[Heb 2:14-15 NKJV] [14] Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, [15] and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.**

#### APPLICATION

The truth of the matter is, when you know God, you know your end, and you trust him in this life, you have something to live for! Not only that, but you can rightfully enjoy the other things in your life that God has given you here and now. This is where Solomon turns:

#### BIBLE PASSAGE

### Ecclesiastes 9:7-10 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>7</sup> Go, eat your bread with joy, And drink your wine with a merry heart; For God has already accepted your works.

<sup>8</sup> Let your garments always be white, And let your head lack no oil.

<sup>9</sup> Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun.

<sup>10</sup> Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.

## APPLICATION

No reason to mope around life worrying about things you can't change! Set some simple goals, and in those goals, you might find some joy and contentment in life. He sums up four categories:

- **Enjoy your provision**
- **Celebrate each moment**
- **Enjoy your spouse**
- **Excel at work**

There is some good advice here. As long as these things don't become idolatry in your life, they can be things to be enjoyed.

## THE FRUIT OF YOUR LABOR

Eat YOUR bread and YOUR wine:

- There is no room here for covetousness of that which isn't yours.
- If you have food, it's because god saw fit to bless you with it. Be grateful and joyful in the supply you've been given.

## CELEBRATE EACH MOMENT

White garments and anointing oil were usually indicative of special occasions and events. A wedding would cause you to dress up and put some oil on your head to refresh your skin and make you look and smell a bit better.

- Here, Solomon adds the word "always." In other words, why wait for the wedding? Why save up for something that may never come? Make this moment special and as enjoyable as you can since you have it because it's a gift from God.

## ENJOY YOUR SPOUSE

Solomon exhorts something he failed to experience: he had 700 wives.

I think you might note a slight difference in the words he uses from his younger years to his older years:

**[Pro 5:18-19 NKJV] [18] Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. [19] As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; And always be enraptured with her love.**

The Song of Solomon seems to indicate that there was one special woman in Solomon's life before he got out of control. Even at the end of his life, he admits that life is better enjoyed with one wife that you love than 1000 women who might satisfy your carnal desires.

In all your days of vanity under the sun, one thing that can improve your life is choosing to make your marriage a joyful experience.

In your marriage, it's best to take the mission of Christ and eternity seriously and take yourselves a little less seriously. Find your fulfillment in Jesus and enjoy life with your spouse.

- I have been so incredibly guilty of missing out on enjoying the relationship I can have with my best friend and lover because of how consumed I can be with running the rat race of life. But to what end?

## BIBLE PASSAGE

### Proverbs 19:14 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>14</sup> Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers, But a prudent wife is from the Lord.

## EXCEL AT WORK

While most people today might see work as drudgery, it is also a creative outlet and something from which one can experience a sense of accomplishment.

- Solomon suggests that our opportunities to learn, grow, be productive, and create are limited to the time we are alive.

10:50



hand finds something to do. When I'm working on a hobby, my hand finds something to do. I have frequently battled the temptation to put my hand to work at certain things in my life while checking out other things in my life. However, the mature perspective will see an even spread across all areas of life.

- **[Col 3:17 NKJV] [17] And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.**
- **With all your might:** This could imply that you do it to the best of your ability or do it while you still have the strength to do it. I think both apply appropriately. Everything we do deserves excellence and the best we can do because our attitude is that we work for the Lord. In addition, you might not always have the physical strength or mental acuity to do certain things that you have the opportunity to do now.

## BIBLE PASSAGE

### Ecclesiastes 9:11-12 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>11</sup> I returned and saw under the sun that— The race is not to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong, Nor bread to the wise, Nor riches to men of understanding, Nor favor to men of skill; But time and chance happen to them all.

<sup>12</sup> For man also does not know his time: Like fish taken in a cruel net, Like birds caught in a snare, So the sons of men are snared in an evil time, When it falls suddenly upon them.

## APPLICATION

Solomon desperately desires to find some viable, workable, logical pattern to life. Some equation that will assure you of life's outcome. But he can't.

Now, we know that you reap what you sew. For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. There are obvious benefits to living godly and obvious side effects from living wickedly. But Solomon is frustrated that things don't always seem to pan out the way they should. Life isn't predictable and tidy.

- Just because you're fast doesn't mean you'll win the race (You might trip or stumble).
- Just because you're strong doesn't mean you'll win the battle. (Your enemy might throw a cheap shot)
- Just because you're wise doesn't mean you'll have food (You could be Albert Einstein and be stuck in an impoverished nation.)
- Just because you have understanding doesn't mean you will get rich. (You could have a genius idea, yet the fool down the street won the lottery.)
- Just because you have great skills doesn't mean you will get favored at work. (The promotion might go to the boss's son-in-law who doesn't possess half the skill or experience.)

Time and chance happen to them all! We've all heard the phrase, "He was in the right place at the right time." Sometimes, there doesn't seem to be much more to it than that. Of course, everything is under the supervision and direction of God's sovereign plan, but sometimes, we scratch our heads because what happens in people's lives doesn't always seem to match the equations we create.

## BIBLE PASSAGE

### Ecclesiastes 9:13-16 (NKJV - New King James Version)

<sup>13</sup> This wisdom I have also seen under the sun, and it seemed great to me:

<sup>14</sup> There was a little city with few men in it; and a great king came against it, besieged it, and built great snares around it.

<sup>15</sup> Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that same poor man.

<sup>16</sup> Then I said: "Wisdom is better than strength. Nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, And his words are not heard.

## APPLICATION

Solomon illustrates his point with a little story; whether true or not, we don't know.

- Have you ever experienced a situation in which someone steals your idea, makes it their own, succeeds, and gets all the credit?
- Let's be honest; that's happened to all of us, and we are all probably guilty of doing that to someone, even unintentionally.
- Here, the story's hero is forgotten and even despised simply because he is poor. He didn't fit the profile of a hero or a strategist, so even though his brilliant idea saved the day, the kings and generals took the credit.

## QUOTE

**“Sometimes, the greatest sources of wisdom come from the most unexpected places.”**

## APPLICATION

God uses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise.

Psalm 8 declares that you have ordained strength out of the mouths of babes and infants. In Jesus' day, children were overlooked, yet it was their praise of him during the triumphal entry that fulfilled prophecy and confounded the religious leaders.

He illustrates his point even further closing the chapter:

**BIBLE PASSAGE****Ecclesiastes 9:17-18 (NKJV - New King James Version)**

<sup>17</sup> Words of the wise, spoken quietly, should be heard Rather than the shout of a ruler of fools.

<sup>18</sup> Wisdom is better than weapons of war; But one sinner destroys much good.”

**APPLICATION**

The wise poor man should heard because of his wisdom over the loud but foolish, brash voice of the leader of fools.

- Notice that a leader can often be assessed by the foolishness or wisdom of those under his leadership. The leader might be loud. He might have a lot of things to say. But if those following his leadership are walking on a strayed course, making foolish decisions.
- Jesus said of the Pharisees, "[Luk 7:35 NKJV] [35] **"...wisdom is justified by all her children."**
- And in this, we have a great lesson, whether it's in politics, church, home, work or relationships:

**QUOTE**

**“ The loudest voice is not always the wisest voice.**

## APPLICATION

There will always be those who try to force others to be swayed by their voice simply by being the most vocal.

- But when determining what we allow into our lives, the question shouldn't be who is the loudest or who is the most prominent. The question should be, "Is there wisdom in what's being said?" And what is wisdom? The fear of the Lord.

That doesn't mean that there aren't popular or influential people that are wise; obviously, there are. Sadly, we often hear the person shouting, and we think that's the person we need to listen to.

- There are politicians shouting from their political platforms
- There are newscasters shouting from their media platform
- There are rockstars shouting from their stage platforms
- There are critics and influencers shouting from their social media platforms

Always remember in the midst of all the shouting, **wisdom is not judged based on its volume but on its content.**