

Your Life Is in the Hand of God

Why worry about the future?

Ecclesiastes 9.1–12

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • February 13, In the year of our Lord Christ, 2022

Scripture Reader and Reading: Paul Hannan – Ecclesiastes 8.12–17

Song Leader and Song Suggestions: Phil Joseph – Faith in God

Prelude:

I. You may see a sinner do evil a hundred times, and

A. he may seem to do well in life.

II. What about you?

A. You love God.

B. You love his church.

C. You pray without ceasing.

1. Yet, you struggle in life.

2. You have one problem after another.

III. Here is what you need to know.

Persuasion:

I. First Thing to Know: Ecclesiastes 9.1 • You Are in God's Hand

1 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.

A. Things do not always seem to go in favor of the God-fearers,

1. who live righteously, but

2. their works and their lives

a) are in the hand of God.

b) They cannot judge love or hate by what they see,

(1) that is, the circumstances of life do not always reveal

(2) God's love or hate.

- (a) Look at the life and death of Jesus.
- (b) Using indicators of earthly blessings,
 - i) we are prone to say that God hated Jesus, but
 - ii) you know that God loved Jesus greatly.

- B. Anyway, the righteous and the wise go about doing good things,
- 1. not fretting over the seeming injustices of life,
 - 2. for they know that their lives are in the hands of God.

23b "...God...holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways..."

– Daniel 5.23

28 "...in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'"

– Acts 17.28

- C. They do not know whether they will experience love or hate, but
- 1. God loves them.
 - 2. That is enough for them.
 - a) It hurts when people hate them, but
 - b) their lives are wrapped up in the Lord and his approval.

II. Second Thing to Know: Ecclesiastes 9.2–3 • One Common Event

2 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.**

**3 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.

A. Solomon in poetry stated

1. what we should all know, but
2. often forget, that
 - a) whether you are righteous or wicked,
 - b) whether you are clean or unclean,
 - c) whether you sacrifice or do not sacrifice,
 - d) whether you are good or a sinner,
 - e) whether you take oaths or fear to take an oath,
 - (1) one event happens to all of us,
 - (2) all things come alike to all.

B. From our vantage point

1. it is an evil thing
2. that the same event happens to all people.
 - a) How can the righteous and the wicked,
 - b) the God-fearers and the God-haters
 - (1) have the same event happen to them?
 - (2) Yet, it happens.

C. While we struggle with that,

1. the wicked use it to set their hearts to be full of evil,
2. they let madness into their hearts during their lives.
 - a) Why can't we live fully,
 - b) letting wisdom into our lives?
3. However, they need to know
 - a) that later they go to the dead, and

b) the great event comes after.

III. Third Thing to Know: Ecclesiastes 9.4–6 • Hope For the Living

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

**5 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.**

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

A. For the one still living there is hope.

1. Once the wicked die,
2. their eternal destiny has been sealed.
 - a) The wicked still living
 - b) can turn around,
 - (1) fear God, and
 - (2) live in righteousness.

B. There is hope for the living

1. even as a living dog
2. is better than a dead lion.
 - a) The lion may have been impressive while alive, but
 - b) once dead, he can do nothing in this life.
 - (1) The dog is nothing compared to the lion, but
 - (2) if the dog lives, it is better than the dead lion!
 - (a) To the Jew,
 - (b) the dog was unclean, nevertheless,
 - i) it is certainly better than

ii) the dead and decaying lion.

(1) What can a dead lion do?

(2) Whereas, what can a living dog do?

C. The dead no longer have a connection with this world.

1. Their bodies no longer function here.

2. So, it appears that they know nothing.

a) They have already established their reward.

b) Life on earth is over for them.

D. By the way,

1. when the so-called, “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” come by your door,

2. one thing that they want to teach you

a) is that when you die,

b) your spirit also dies.

(1) You no longer exist, but

(2) they believe that the Lord will resurrect them, and then

(a) they shall live on a paradise earth.

(b) They use verse 5 to teach that we have no consciousness after death.

i) When they teach you this,

ii) always remember to check the context, for

(1) verse 6 refutes their idea that they shall live on earth again.

(2) The point is they do not use this passage properly.

IV. Fourth Thing to Know: Ecclesiastes 9.7–10 • Enjoy Life

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

8 Let your garments always be white,

And let your head lack no oil.

9 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. 10 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.

A. The teaching of verses 4–6 being true,

1. the point of verses 7–10 is that
2. now is the time to make the most of your life.
 - a) You cannot come back and try life again.
 - b) Enjoy life now instead of fearing evil.
 - (1) Many people live their one shot at life
 - (2) in fear of everyone and everything.
 - (a) Many people make nothing of their lives.
 - (b) Use what God has given you and made you to be.
3. Did God intend for you to live that way? No!

B. v. 7 – Enjoy Life by Enjoying Food

1. If you fear God and live in righteousness,
2. God has accepted your works.
 - a) Do not worry then about your life or your future eternity.
 - b) Go and live your life.
 - (1) For when you die,
 - (2) heaven is your home.

C. v. 8 – Enjoy Life by Showing It

1. Let your outward appearance show that you enjoy life.
2. If, as verse 1 stated, you seek righteousness and wisdom, then
 - a) you and your works are in the hand of God!

b) Live that belief!

D. v. 9 – Enjoy Life by Enjoying Your Marriage and Family

1. Why live miserably with your spouse?
2. Live joyfully with one another.
 - a) Do what you have to do to reignite your love.
 - b) Why not make the most of it?

E. v. 10 – Enjoy Life by Enjoying Work

1. Do not be lazy, nor do things halfheartedly.
2. Remember you only have one chance at this life.
 - a) Now is the time to make something of it.
 - b) Now is the time to make something of yourself.

F. For the place where we are going, the grave,

1. we can no longer work, devise, learn, or understand there.
2. We do those things now.

V. Fifth Thing to Know: Ecclesiastes 9.11–12 • Who Wins?

**11 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.**

**12 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.**

A. Solomon again looked at life, and

1. have you not found the same things as he did?

2. Do the swift always win the race?
 3. Do the strong always win the battle?
 4. Do the wise always get the bread?
 5. Do men and women of understanding always get the riches?
 6. Do men and women of skill always get the favor?
- B. How does it seem to go in this life?
1. It appears that time and chance happen to them all.
 2. Yet, remember
 - a) God holds in his hand
 - b) the righteous, the wise, and their works.
- C. Solomon said that we cannot predict our time.
1. Even as we think the swift should win the race, but
 2. they often do not,
 - a) so it seems that some people should live a long time and
 - b) others should live a short time, but
 - (1) that often does not happen.
- D. The day of death comes when we least expect it,
1. like a fish taken in a cruel net, or
 2. a bird caught in a snare,
 - a) so, we are snared in an evil time,
 - b) a time that we did not choose for death.
 - (1) If you could choose the time of your death,
 - (2) what time would you choose?

Exhortation:

I. Death happens to everyone, because

A. we all have an appointment with death,

27 ...it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment...

– Hebrews 9.27

1. The only ones who will miss the appointment

2. will be living at the return of Christ!

a) Did you know that Jesus is returning?

B. Do you want to prepare for his arrival and

1. have him take you to heaven?

2. Do you not already believe that he is the Son of God?

a) If so, why have you not committed your life to him

b) by dying to self and

(1) being reborn through baptism?

C. Between now and your death or his return,

1. do not let the prospect of death rob you of enjoyment.

II. Considering all that we have seen from Ecclesiastes 9, and

A. what it said about death,

B. if you become a follower of Jesus Christ,

1. you can then have the confidence that the psalmist had,

14 But as for me, I trust in You, O LORD;

I say, "You are my God."

15 My times are in Your hand;

Deliver me from the hand of my enemies [one of which is death],

And from those who persecute me.

16 Make Your face shine upon Your servant;

Save me for Your mercies' sake.

17 Do not let me be ashamed, O LORD, for I have called upon You;

Let the wicked be ashamed;

Let them be silent in the grave.

– **Psalm 31.14–17**

2. Why wait any longer?