

The Book of Ecclesiastes

Lesson 7: One Fate for All; Enjoy the Life God Gives -- Ecclesiastes 9:1-18

Stand for a moment at the edge of a cemetery and read the stones. Here lies a woman who loved God with her whole heart, and three rows over lies a man who never gave Him a thought. The grass grows the same over both. The rain falls the same. Solomon stood at that very edge in Ecclesiastes 9, and what he saw unsettled him. The righteous and the wise, he says, are in the hand of God, yet the same event happens to all of them, the good and the evil alike. He does not pretend the puzzle away. He names it honestly, and his honesty makes room for ours.

Then, in the middle of that hard observation, the Preacher does something tender. He hands us bread. He pours us wine. He tells us to put on white garments and a little oil, to love the spouse God has given us, and to do our work with all our might while we have hands to do it. It is not the laughter of a man who has forgotten he will die. It is the joy of a man who remembers it, and who has decided that every plain gift of an ordinary day comes down to us from the hand of a generous God.

Solomon is writing under the sun, looking at what the eye can see. From down here, death looks like the end of everything: no work, no planning, no knowledge in the grave to which we are all going. He is not handing us a doctrine of the afterlife. He is telling the truth about what life looks like with the lid of the sky over it and no farther. And that truth has a sharp and useful edge. If today is the only stretch of time you actually hold in your hand, then today is the day to live, to love, to work, and to walk with God.

So this lesson presses gently on your calendar. You keep telling yourself you will rest later, mend that friendship later, do that good work later, enjoy your family later. Solomon leans in and reminds you that time and chance happen to all, that none of us knows our hour, and that the fish do not see the net until it closes. Later is a promise no one can make. The bread on your table tonight, the person across from you, the task in front of you tomorrow morning, these are the gifts of God for this day. Receive them. And receive the One who, long after Solomon laid down his pen, abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

Group Discussion: Solomon both grieves that one event comes to the righteous and the wicked (9:2-3) and urges us to enjoy bread, wine, and work as gifts of God (9:7-10). How can a person hold honest sorrow about death and wholehearted joy in daily life at the same time without one canceling the other?

Personal Reflection: Name one ordinary, recurring gift from God that you have stopped noticing, a meal, a person, a kind of work. What would it look like this week to receive it again with gratitude instead of letting it pass unseen?

Read Ecclesiastes 9:1-18

Study Questions

1. In Ecclesiastes 9:1, what does it mean that the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God, and how does that truth steady a believer who cannot yet make sense of life's events?
2. Where do you tend to look for security when life feels uncertain, and what would change if you rested in being held in God's hand rather than in your own control?
3. Solomon says the same event happens to all, the righteous and the wicked alike (9:2–3), and it troubles him. Why does Scripture let this hard observation stand, and what does the rest of the Bible add that Solomon, looking only under the sun, does not say here?
4. When you see the wicked seeming to prosper and the godly suffering loss, how does your heart respond, and how can the fuller hope of Scripture keep you from bitterness or envy?
5. What does the Preacher mean by saying a living dog is better than a dead lion, that the living know they will die (9:4–5)? How can knowing we will die actually be a gift to how we live?
6. Is there a hard truth about your own mortality that you have been avoiding, and how might facing it honestly, as Solomon does, make you wiser and more alive rather than more afraid?
7. In 9:7–9 Solomon commands us to eat our bread with joy, wear white garments, and love the spouse God has given. Why does he frame everyday enjoyment as something God has already approved, and what does that teach about how God means for His people to live?
8. Which of these plain gifts, food, celebration, marriage and family, friendship, do you most often rush past or treat as ordinary, and what would it look like to enjoy it this week as a gift God has approved?
9. Solomon urges, 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 to which you are going (9:10). Read carefully: how do we let this verse fuel wholehearted, present-day work and faithfulness without twisting it into a denial of conscious life and judgment after death that the New Testament plainly teaches (Luke 16:19–31; John 5:28–29; Hebrews 9:27; 2 Timothy 1:10)?
10. Solomon shows that the poor wise man who saved the city was forgotten, yet wisdom is still better than strength (9:13–18). Name one specific way Jesus, the truest wise One who was despised and forgotten by men yet delivered us, is reshaping how you measure a life well lived.

Digging Deeper

Reflect on these passages: Luke 16:19–31, the rich man and Lazarus show conscious existence and reversal beyond the grave; Hebrews 9:27, it is appointed for man to die once and after this the judgment; 2 Corinthians 5:1–10, an eternal house from God and our aim to please Him; 2

Timothy 1:10, Christ abolished death and brought life and immortality to light; Philippians 1:21-23, to live is Christ and to die is gain, to depart and be with Christ

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