

Daily Bible Study

“Discouragements & Directives”

Ecclesiastes 9:1-18

September 15 – September 21, 2013

MONDAY –We continue this week in our study of **Ecclesiastes** and look at **Chapter 9**. This chapter, at least in its beginning portions has been called the most pessimistic of all of Solomon’s writing. There is no doubt there are some things in this text which could cause a person to “feel” pessimistic about life and the life to come. Thankfully, God does not leave us to wallow miserably without direction but tells us through Solomon’s pen how we may make preparations. Robert E. Lee’s last words were, “Let the tent be struck!” Unless Jesus returns in the Second coming while we are alive, we will one day “*strike our earthly tent*” (**2 Corinthians 5:1–8**) and leave this battlefield for a better land. We must be ready and in this chapter, Solomon helps us prepare as he gives us two facts of life; they are: death is unavoidable (**1–10**) and life is unpredictable (**11–18**). That being the case, he again as he has done before, tells us the best thing we can do is trust God, live by faith, and enjoy whatever blessings God gives us. **Ecclesiastes 8:9-17**: “*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. ²All 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. ³This 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. ⁴But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. ⁵For 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. ⁶Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished; Nevermore will they have a share In anything done under the sun. ⁷Go, eat your bread with joy, And drink your wine with a merry heart; For God has already accepted your works. ⁸Let your garments always be white, And let your head lack no oil. ⁹Live 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. ¹⁰Whatever 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. ¹¹I 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. ¹²For 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. ¹³This wisdom I have also seen under the sun, and it seemed great to me: ¹⁴There was a little city with few men in it; and a great king came against it, besieged it, and built great snares around it. ¹⁵Now 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. ¹⁶Then I said: “Wisdom is better than strength. Nevertheless the poor man’s wisdom is despised, And his words are not heard. ¹⁷Words of the wise, spoken quietly, should be heard Rather than the shout of a ruler of fools. ¹⁸Wisdom is better than weapons of war; But one sinner destroys much good.”

Suggestion for Prayer: Father God, help me learn from Your Word how to live by faith and not be pessimistic and anxious about things I might not fully understand. Teach me how to love and trust You and walk by faith as I enjoy You and the wonderful blessings You bestow upon me.

TUESDAY – **Ecclesiastes 9:1-6**: “*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. ²All 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. ³This 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. ⁴But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. ⁵For 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. ⁶Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished; Nevermore will they have a share In anything done under the sun.*” Solomon reflects on what he has learned from his observations and experimenting with life “under the sun” and he is brought to some difficult and discouraging realities if one lives apart from biblical faith and trust in God alone and the gospel for Salvation. This first portion is all about God’s Sovereignty over all and the fact of death. He tells us in **verse 1** that the fate of man is ultimately in the hand of God. Death is not an accident, rather it is an appointment (**Hebrews 9:27**). Our *works are in the hand of God* and only He knows our future, whether it will bring blessing (“love”) or sorrow (“hatred”). Solomon is not saying we are mere robots in living life, but He is saying the Biblical truth that only God knows what the future hold for us and what will happen tomorrow because of the decisions we make today. The fate of man is ultimately in the hand of God. The Christian’s hope is in *the hand of God: ‘Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he might exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon him, for he cares for you’ (1 Peter 5:6–7)*. **Verses 2-6** inform us that regardless of whether we are righteous or wicked, *All things come alike to all: One event happens...one thing happens to all*; death. There is one thing about dead versus living men. The dead will be forgotten but living men can have hope. *A living dog is better than a dead lion*. To guard however against a false hope we need

remember; one day we will die (v. 5) but as believers in Jesus we have “a living hope,” not a “dead” hope, because Jesus conquered death and is alive forevermore (**1 Peter 1:3–5**, **2 Timothy 1:10**). We do not “hope in hope”, but as the Psalmist said, “*Hope in God*” (**Psalm 42**). A hope that can be destroyed by physical death is not any good at all. We are living now and therefore can respond to God’s Word and instruction. May we do so.

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me realize that I’m alive & therefore I can not only hope in Jesus but also hear Him in Sacred Scripture, talk to Him in prayer, and obey Him in living.

WEDNESDAY – Ecclesiastes 9:7-10: 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.”* These next verses provide a nice oasis from despair. The text reads that a person should enjoy life because *God has already accepted your works*. Dr. Michael Eaton comments, “This almost Pauline touch is the nearest the Preacher came to a doctrine of justification by faith. Man has but to receive contentment as God’s gift (cf. 3:13); God will approve of him and his works. The believer is not struggling for acceptance; he is already accepted.” We understand that righteousness does not come from our own works and labor (**Romans 6:23**, **Ephesians 2:8–9**). The works that are accepted by God are those that are the expression of thanksgiving and obedience to the God who has saved us by his grace (**James 2:17–26**). As Jesus said in **John 6:29**, “*This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.*” So now in light of this we are told here in the text to enjoy God’s blessings to the full. **Verse 7** says enjoy your meals; we eat and drink for God’s glory (**1 Corinthians 10:31**). Enjoy your memories (**Verse 8**); *white garments* symbolizing festive and joyous times such as weddings, banquets, etc... and perfumed oils are worn at these events. We also see here in the white garments a deep and profound meaning for the Christian (**Revelation 7:9–14**, **2 Corinthians 1:21–22**). Enjoy your marriage mate (**Verse 9**) living faithfully and joyfully with them for your entire lives. **Verse 10** says enjoy your work and be wholehearted in it seeing it as a stewardship from God. If a man doesn’t work he shouldn’t eat (**2 Thessalonians 3:10**). Do your best at these things and do them with all your might (**Colossians 3:17**). Our attitude of joy and enjoyment is summed up in **Philippians 4:4**.

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, teach me to really enjoy You and then enjoy Your blessings. Thank You for the white garment of Jesus righteousness which clothes my nakedness by faith.

THURSDAY – Ecclesiastes 9:11-12: 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.” Solomon now returns to a seeming melancholy. We know that things don’t always go to plan. He tells us that sometimes things like a fluke touchdown or goal can win the game, a sleeper punch can knock-out the boxing champ, an unforeseen calamity can ruin a financial giant. What determines the course of our lives and their end? The humanistic man sees “luck” or “getting the breaks” or some such thing. As believers we know that “luck, fate, and chance” are simply the incomprehensible activities of a God who is working things to his eternal purpose. If he says and determines things like “the last will be first” (**Matthew 20:16**), and “**For to everyone who has, more will be given**” (**Matthew 25:29**), then that will be the way it is (**Romans 8:28**). We also plan neither our birth into this world or departures from it. As the fish is caught in the prime of his life, in the full vigour of health and activity, so is man, *snared in an evil time when it* (death and eternity) *falls suddenly upon them*. Man is trapped in this helpless state and should cry out, *Who will deliver me from this body of death?* (**Romans 7:24**).

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, teach me understand and be at rest with the fact that You control all things. “Luck” and “chance” are merely sinful ways of speaking of Your sovereign workings. Help me to live in such a way that I’m prepared and ready when You call me.

FRIDAY – Ecclesiastes 9:13-18: ¹³ *This wisdom I have also seen under the sun, and it seemed great to me:* ¹⁴ *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.* ¹⁵ *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.* ¹⁶ *Then I said: “Wisdom is better than strength. Nevertheless the poor man’s wisdom is despised, And his words are not heard.”* ¹⁷ *Words of the wise, spoken quietly, should be heard Rather than the shout of a ruler of fools.* ¹⁸ *Wisdom is better than weapons of war; But one sinner destroys much good.”* It is a remarkable thought that Solomon uses the word *great* to express what he learned about true wisdom and the meaning of life. This man I sn’t easily impressed. He tells a story to illustrate about a poor wise man who saved a city by his wisdom (skill), *Yet no one remembered that same poor man*. This is how sinful people are living under the sun. Some conclusions? “*Wisdom is better than strength*”. God’s way is better than man’s, even though it is a stumbling block to some and foolishness to others (**1 Corinthians 1:23**). Man may despise the gospel and do much to not allow it to go forth but *Words of the wise* will be heard by those God intends. Wise words (God’s words since He is Wisdom) often meet with a mixed reception. After Paul’s sermon on Mars Hill, we are told, “*Some mocked, while others said, “We will hear you again on this matter” ... However, some men joined him and believed.*” (**Acts 17:32–34**). *But one sinner destroys much good* deals with the root of the whole problem; our sinful heart. Through the sin of one man we’ve been brought into the bondage of death, and through the obedience of another we have been delivered (**Romans 5:12–21**).

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me trust, believe, & obey the righteous man, Jesus Christ.