

Ecclesiastes 9 - Week 7

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2023 - PASTOR MICHAEL BOWERS



Summary - “Everything Under the Sun“

The twelve chapters of Ecclesiastes are filled with a myriad of teachings regarding wisdom in moments about life, relationships, wealth, worship, and death. Solomon writes as a realist who understands and reinforces what we already know: life is a vapor, and everything under the sun, on its own, has no lasting value. This book forces us to ask the questions: What is my real view of God? Is God sovereign? Is God all-powerful? Is God all-present? Is God the creator? These are big questions Ecclesiastes (and the rest of the Bible) answers for us. As we answer these questions, we are also forced to wrestle with questions about ourselves: What is my view of myself? Am I all-present, all-knowing? Can I fix it all? Did I create everything under the sun? The answer to these questions about self, is of course, a resounding “NO!” After examining all of these questions in chapters 1-8, Solomon jumps into chapter 9 and reminds us of some very important truths: 1.) God is in control, and we are not, 2.) One thing is certain: Death, 3.) Be the kind of people that enjoy your days, and 4.) Life is best lived with an understanding of death through the promise of eternal life.

Scripture - Ecclesiastes 9:1-12

But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God. Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him. 2 It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. 3 This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. 4 But he who is joined with all the living has 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 Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun. 7 Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do. 8 Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head. 9 Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. 10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going. 11 Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all. 12 For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.

Key Apps, Websites, and Online Tools for Further Study

- <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>
- <https://www.biblegateway.com/>
- <https://biblehub.com/>
- <https://www.youversion.com/>
- <https://www.bibleref.com/>
- <https://bible.org/>
- <https://netbible.org/>
- <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/>
- <https://www.gty.org/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/>
- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>
- <https://carm.org/>
- <https://dwellapp.io/>

Further Scripture Study

1 Kings 3-10; Ecclesiastes 9; John 11:25-26; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 5:25; James 4:13-15

As you study the scripture verses provided for this week, study for right context and right questions..

Right Context:

- The verse itself and key word(s) that stand out in the verse (meanings)
- The verses around the verse, the section of scripture, the chapter, the book, old/new testament, and relation to the rest of scripture
- Author and Date (Who wrote the book and when?)
- Audience (Who is the book written to? Main characters in the story and/or text?)
- Main points and overall purpose of the book
- Historical background, cultural significance, setting, people, rulers, etc.
- Scripture references; let scripture interpret scripture as much as possible

Right Questions:

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean to its original audience?
- What is this passage teaching me about God?
- What does this passage tell us about man?
- What does this passage demand of me? (Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a sin to avoid? How is this applicable to me?)
- How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (What actions must I take in response to this passage?)
- What does this passage prompt me to pray? (For God, for others, for my community, for family, etc.)

Key Thoughts

We will not have an answer to every question in life. God is in control, we are not. Our whole lives are in the hands of God.

“Ecclesiastes is written to smash into tiny pieces our idea that we can be like God. We aspire to know it all, have it all, do it all, achieve it all, be happy forever, have all the answers, never be left scratching our heads, and be remembered for all time.” (David Gibson - Living Life Backwards pg. 107)

One thing is certain...death. “Death makes nonsense of all of life’s distinctions.” ~ Alistair Begg

Under the sun, here, walking these streets, seeing the brokenness and hurt, it does not always add up to us. We don’t grasp the answers to all of the questions we have: the suffering, the pain, the sickness, the death, the turmoil, and the tragedies. But it does circle back around to a larger truth that we continue to hear our teacher from Ecclesiastes remind us: God is in control

As things come to us in life - relationships, opportunities, friends, jobs, health, sickness, wealth, poverty, we can trust it is all in God’s hands and therefore receive it saying, “God must desire for me to have this, and to walk through this. Therefore, I will embrace it and endure it.”

Many of us often try to live a life different from where we have been planted. And what Solomon is saying is this. If God gives you circumstances in life, you embrace them. You walk through them trusting that God is good, that there will be a way through those circumstances and that you’ll draw closer to him as a result of it. The other option is to spend all of our energies, pursuing a life that God didn’t give us, living in ways that God didn’t call us, and trying to take matters, literally, into our own hands. Life comes. You accept and walk with God through it, or you fight it and try to be your own God.

Live life to the fullest in the place God has planted you, with the time he has given, in the community and with the people around you in the way he has created you, until you breathe your last breath. If we trust in God, and we don’t forget death, not fixate on death, but be reminded it is coming, then we live in the place, with the people, and the resources God has given us. We can enjoy our days, in light of death, because of who God is and because of the plan He put in motion.

Married men: Enjoy your wife. Date your wife. Cherish your wife. And if you are too busy in life to enjoy life, and the wife whom you love, then you are simply too busy. Be the kind of people who enjoy your days.

Don’t try to become someone you are not, quit striving in vain, pause, live life, death will come, but if we place our hope and trust in Christ, then death becomes the doorway.

Life is best lived with an understanding of death through the promise of eternal life (In Jesus Christ).

Reflect & Respond

What is your real view of God? Is God sovereign? Is God all-powerful? Is God all-present? Is God the creator? Don't just answer yes, but really dwell and pray on this a bit. Are there any of these, or other attributes of God for that matter, that you wrestle with?

What is your honest view of yourself, in comparison to your view of God? Where are you most tempted to try to step in and attempt to control in your own strength and power versus trusting in God's plans?

As things come to us in life - relationships, opportunities, friends, jobs, health, sickness, wealth, poverty - we can trust it is all in God's hands (remember, He is in control, we are not!) and therefore receive it saying, "God must desire for me to have this and to walk through this. Therefore, I will embrace it and endure it." Where and/or when have you struggled to live this out in your life?

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 Do you live your life as the kind of person who is enjoying their days? What does this look like for you? If not, then what needs to change so that you can enjoy your days?

Is the way you live your life bringing glory to God? How does the way you live your life currently impact others around you?

Life is best lived with an understanding of death through the promise of eternal life (In Jesus Christ). Do you believe this? Do you believe we can enjoy this life because our view of death can be shifted, because of the hope we have in God for our eternity? Do you believe Jesus to be who he says he is, not only in the words of scripture, but in your life right now...today?

Additional Thoughts