



Ecclesiastes 8-9

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Tape #7237
By Chuck Smith

Let's turn to Ecclesiastes chapter eight as we continue through the Bible. Solomon is writing the book of Ecclesiastes from the perspective of a jaded old man. He has seen it all, he has tried it all, he's not withheld anything and he thinks of his old age, "I was young, now I am old". We do know that Solomon, in his later years, was turned from his faith in the Lord and he built pagan temples in Jerusalem to satisfy the wives that he had married from the various cultures around in those days. Having many wives and trying to please them, he has built these pagan temples and he had turned from that real close relationship with God that he knew as a boy and as a young king.

Thus the view of life is one of sort of cynicism because as you grow old and you are away from God and the hope that we have in Christ Jesus, if you just look at the world it is unsatisfying and unfulfilling. Life seems to have passed by and there still that void within. When you are young you still have your ambitions, your goals and your dreams and you are prone to fantasize.

It is interesting to me that in recent times Ted Turner of CNN fame has spoken of the emptiness of all of his success. Donald Trump was speaking of how empty success was. When you haven't yet attained success, you think it would be glorious. You have all of these visions and dreams of what it would be like. But having achieved and attained these things, Solomon still experienced that void and emptiness within and thus over and over the sad refrain is that of emptiness, vanity, "This also was vanity [emptiness]", this also unfulfilling, this also was frustrating.

He is now an older man; a man of experience, a man who has tasted everything the world has to possibly offer him. He speaks of the emptiness and the frustration that he feels concerning life. Not always are the statements of Solomon Biblical truth. He speaks from a position of a worldly man who has lost his faith in God and his hope in life. Thus the conclusions are those of a worldly man and not necessarily biblical truth. In fact, he speaks some things that are Biblically wrong, even as a person today that would just be writing his philosophy concerning life. If he is apart from God he is apt to draw conclusions that would not be correct. Solomon expresses opinions that are not biblical and we will see some of those tonight.

In the beginning of chapter eight he speaks about his observations of people and his feelings of how they ought to respond and react around a king.

WHO is as the wise man? and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? a man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness [strength] of his face shall be changed. I counsel thee to keep the king's commandment, and that in regard of the oath of God (8:1-2).

Keep the king's commandment and that in regard to the oath of God. He had said earlier that you should be careful when you come into the presence of God not to be too ready to speak or to make vow. "It is better," he said, "not to make a vow at all than to make a vow and break it". He is exhorting to keep the commandment, especially in regards to taking these oaths before the Lord.

Be not hasty to go out of his sight: stand not in evil thing; for there doeth whatsoever pleaseth him. Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou? (8:3-4).

God is king. The kings were sovereigns; they were the sovereign rulers. Probably the most efficient form of government is that of a monarchy. The success of a monarchy is dependent upon the success of the king. If you have a good king, you have a perfect form of government because look at all the hassling we have in our Democracy. Look how long it takes to get laws inaugurated or laws changed, all of the filibustering and

everything else that goes on. It is a good form of government but it is extremely inefficient because look how much it's costing you. We can hardly afford government anymore. Everytime I see these cars with an "EE" on the license plate I think, "There's another one I am paying his salary". The government employs so many people and it's extremely inefficient, Democracy. It's good but it's costly and inefficient. Whereas a king, a monarch, has a sovereign reign, he does what he pleases. If he is a good king you have an ideal type of situation as far as efficiency in government.

God reigns as king. Jesus Christ shall reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords and because of his righteousness that going to be glorious form of government when Jesus reigns, his word is sovereign. It will be a righteous reign. It will be a glorious reign. Speaking of a king you are of course speaking of God and it says, "he does whatsoever he pleases (8:3). That's one thing about being a king, you can do whatever you please. "Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What are you doing?" (8:4) and God, as he speaks, there is power. Who could really say to God, "What are you doing"?

Paul the apostle, in speaking of the sovereignty of God, used the figure of the potter and the clay. He said, "What right has the clay to say to the potter, Why have you made me thus?" speaking of that awesome sovereign power of God. So kings are sovereign, God is sovereign, what would apply to a king as far as his ability rule or his works not being challenged, so it is true of God. In the word of God there is power and we have no right to challenge the ways of God.

Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing: and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgement (8:5).

The timing again, we've dealt with that for the last couple of weeks. A wise man will consider timing and good judgement.

Because to every purpose there is a time and judgment, therefore the misery of man is great upon him (8:6).

It's hard for us many times to wait for that perfect timing. We are so anxious to see things done. We move out ahead, so often, and we experience the misery of our impetuosity. In moving out ahead of God without waiting upon God, we don't know what the future holds and thus we can make great mistakes.

For he knoweth not that which shall be: for who can tell him when it shall be? (8:7).

It's timing again, I don't what's going to be, and I don't know when it's going to be so it's a matter of timing. For you to jump ahead of God or try to move out without directions from God, without waiting upon God, you are just cruising for a bruising really.

Now he looks at life and death.

There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; (8:8).

The Bible teaches that man basically is spirit, we live in a body, the body is not us, the real me isn't this body. The body is designed and intended by God to be the medium by which my spirit expresses itself. There will come a time for each of us when our spirit will leave our body. When that time comes, no one has the power to retain his spirit. My time comes to go, I'm going. I will have no power to prolong my life. No man has the power to retain his spirit.

neither hath he power in the day of death: (8:8).

When death comes, we must yield to it, we can't fight it.

and there is no discharge in that war; (8:8).

There is a war that is going on. There is no discharge from the service. One day we will face death, we can't escape it.

neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it. All this have I seen, and applied my heart unto every work that is done under the sun: there is a time wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt (8:8-9).

I've watched and I've seen people given authority and they don't know how to use authority and they abuse that authority that they have but in reality, they themselves are the ones who ultimately suffer from the abusing of the position of authority.

And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this is also vanity [emptiness] (8:10).

He had seen others, he was getting old and he realizes the time of his departure was coming along before too long. He realized that he wouldn't be able to escape death. All of his wisdom wasn't going to prolong his life. He had known the fact that his wisdom will do him no good when he faces death. "How does the wise man like a fool? I die, the fool dies, so why am I any better than the fool?" I know so much but what is it going to do me? It won't prolong my life. He saw the emptiness of all of the massing of wisdom that he had applied himself too.

Now he watched others come and go. I watched them as they went in to worship the Lord but I saw them buried and soon people forgot them. Life goes on. You may have accomplished wonderful things but sometimes you are forgotten even before you die if you live too long. After you die, it isn't long before you're forgotten except for maybe family relatives and they'll point in the photo album saying, "That was grandpa so and so and he built the bay bridge in San Francisco". The memory passes. Do you know who built the bay bridge in San Francisco? I don't either but I mean I imagine the guy was quite proud over that thing, the man who designed it. You forget, they pass on and so the emptiness of accomplishments.

Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil (8:11).

Talking about the nature and the character of God, we know that as God's nature is described there are aspects of the nature of God such as, he is longsuffering, he is slow to anger, he is plenteous in mercy, he's very patient, that is God puts up with an awful lot of stuff. Look at how he has put up with you. It seems that we are so slow to learn and yet God is so patient in teaching us.

My older daughter is just the most patient person. She taught kindergarten and is just so patient. She taught kindergarten until she started to raise her own family and now she is raising a family but she is so patient. She's got a little one year old who is almost two and you know how the saying goes, "the terrible two's" but as far as she's concerned it isn't the terrible two's at all. This evening, he was wanting a cookie and as soon as he got it he wanted down from her lap so he could walk around the house with the cookie. That's a no-no in grandma's house. You sit at the table to eat the food; you don't walk around the house eating the food.

He was determined; he wanted down to eat the cookie. My daughter couldn't let him down because that's a no-no in our house and so he was fussing, he was squealing and he was squirming to get down. Finally, I took the cookie from him and he thought he would get down and get the cookie back. So he got down and then he wanted the cookie back and I said, "Oh no". He started this dancing and screaming. I said, "I'd seen Indians dancing like that" and my daughter, watching him do this little dance there in the kitchen I mean he was really just red faced and dancing, she said, "Isn't that cute the way he expresses himself?" she said, "Sometimes he even gets on the floor and kicks and screams". She is so patient. Now we didn't let our kids do that. We'd say straighten up or you'll get swatted, not her.

I think of how patient God is. I wonder when we are going through our little tantrums if God doesn't say, "Isn't that a cute way of them expressing themselves?" She just sort of ignored him. I wonder if God just sort of ignores us sometimes, when we are going through all these fits that we sometimes go through. God is patient, God is longsuffering and God is slow to anger but many times, people make a grave mistake

in misinterpreting the patience of God as weakness. God won't punish evil. That's a tragic mistake to make. God is slow to anger but God will not keep his patience forever. It is possible to step over the line and God will judge righteously.

God is longsuffering, however, there is a limit. In history we see where people have gone over the limit. In the time of Noah, God was extremely patient with those people who were as the scripture said, "The imagination of their hearts was nothing but wickedness continually". Every man was doing that which was right in their own eyes. The wickedness of the earth was exceedingly great and yet God was so patient and during the hundred years that Noah was building the ark, God was patient and longsuffering with those people. God was not weak. He gave them the opportunities to repent and their refusing to do so, the judgement of God ultimately came and when it did, it was awesome and it was final.

Some people mistake the patience of God as approval, as though God doesn't really care what they are doing. You could do what you please and God doesn't really care, God doesn't really now. In Psalm seventy-three the psalmist spoke of the wicked who seemed to prosper and get by with their evil. They were saying, "Does God know? Is there any knowledge in the most high?" and because they were getting by with their wickedness, they were thinking that God didn't know and God didn't care, it doesn't really matter to God how you live. That again is a mistake. God is concerned and God does know.

Now because the sentence against the evil work is not executed speedily many people take advantage by misinterpreting the patience of God and they set themselves fully to do evil. The reason why God doesn't execute it speedily is because he is merciful and he wants to give man every chance in the world to repent.

Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before him: But it shall not be well with the wicked, (8:12-13).

They may live a long life, it may seem they prosper, it may seem that God lets them get by with it, but I know that in the end it will be well with those who live righteously and it will not be well with the wicked.

neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth no before God (8:13).

In Proverbs twenty-nine he speaks of "He, that being often reproved harnesses his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Proverbs 29:1). There comes that time, God is patient and he puts up with a lot, he will reprove you, he will correct you, but if you harden yourself against God then the judgement, when it does come, will be final and severe.

There is a vanity [emptiness] which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said that this also is vanity (8:14).

What he saying is there are just men who suffer and there are wicked men who prosper. A difficult thing for us to understand because if we were God, we could really mess things up. We would just bless everybody who is good and prosper everybody who is good. We would really take care of those who were bad, speedily. But if you are looking for people to love you and fellowship with you for who you are how would you know that they loved you for who are rather than for the perks that you are giving them? If God just blessed the socks off of all the good people, then people would be good because they want there socks blessed off.

If God swiftly punished all the evil people then people would be afraid of doing evil but they would not cease doing evil because they loved God. God wants you to love him for who he is, for his grace and for his mercy and for his goodness. He wants to draw into this loving relationship but he wants it to be a meaningful thing, so he doesn't always bless the good people. Sometimes good people suffer. Job suffered tremendously. In the midst of all of that suffering he said, "The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed

be the name of the Lord". In all of the losses he did not curse God or charge God fully. That's why God bragged on Job, "Have you considered my servant Job? He's a good man, he's upright, he loves good, he hates evil and he didn't turn against of me in spite of all that you did". That's the kind of devotion that God is looking for.

He wants us to serve him out of motive of the pure heart of love towards him, "Lord, I love you and I will serve you if you strip me of everything that I have or if you bless me". My love to God is not related to my physical wellbeing. It's just because he first loved me, I love him. Knowing him, knowing how gracious and good and kind he is, I love him. Solomon, looking at this, couldn't figure it out. This is wrong, this is emptiness, and this is something that I see as an incongruous thing. Good men who things happen to them that should happen to the wicked. Wicked men, things happen to him that should happen to the good.

Then I commended mirth, [fun] because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun (8:15).

This is a false conclusion that Solomon is drawing because he's looking at the whole scene from a purely worldly standpoint, a jaded old man who has lost his relationship with God. So he says, "Hey, party it up man, eat drink and be merry, for tomorrow you'll die. So just go for it and grab what fun and pleasure out of life that you can exact from that". Wrong.

When I applied mine heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done upon the earth: (for also there is that neither day nor night seeth sleep with his eyes:) Then I beheld all the work of God that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun: because though a man labour to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea farther; though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it (8:16-17).

So he concluded you can't really understand God. That's true. You can't understand the ways of God. That's true. God said, "My ways are not your ways, my ways are beyond your finding out". One of the problems that we have in our Christian life is seeking to understand the ways of God. How many times have we said, "Why God? Lord I don't understand. Why did you allow this to happen? Why didn't you do that Lord?" We don't understand the ways of God. As a result, we're forced to just trust the Lord. That's what God answers to me. You say, "Well why God," and he says, "Trust me son. Just trust me". God is pleased when you just trust him though you don't understand.

For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them (9:1).

In nature you can't get a clear revelation of God because you look at fallen nature. So Solomon says that he's trying to observe life, he can't really understand if he's a God of love or a God of hatred. He sees inequity, he sees problems and he sees cruelty in nature. It is true that nature can reveal a certain part of God. The vastness of the universe can declare to you the glory of God. The heavens declare the glory. The life forms on the earth can declare to you the infinite wisdom of God, the earth shows his handy work and day into day they are speaking to us, night into night the voices going forth and it is a universal language. There's not a speech nor a language where the voice is not heard.

In nature we come to understand that God exists. But to try to get a clear understanding of God from nature is difficult. I look at that beautiful Gazelle with all of the grace with which it can run and I see a lion pouncing on it and tearing it to pieces. I sort of cringe at the cruelty that I see in nature. I am looking at fallen nature. I am not looking at the world as God created it. I see the world as it is in a fallen state from that original creation. There will be a day when the earth will be restored to its original purpose and intent and we read that "in that day the lion will lie down with the lamb and a little child shall lead them". So a lion would make an excellent pet for your children in those days. They'll put a leash on it and lead it around,

maybe even ride the thing. It couldn't happen today because of the fallen condition of the earth and thus we need to really know God, a revelation of God apart from nature. That's what the Bible gives to us.

Solomon is speaking of his seeking to understand the works that are in the hand of God. No man knows either love or hatred by what he sees before him.

All things come alike to all: (9:2).

The rain falls on the just and on the unjust.

there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth no: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath (9:2).

It seems like it doesn't really matter if you live a good life or a wicked life. You could have problems or you can have prosperity and it doesn't seem to be related to your life-style.

This is an evil among all things that are done under the sun, that there is one event unto all: yea, also the heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead (9:3).

No matter who well you live or how easily you live, there is one event, that we all die. We can't escape it. The same event comes to all of us, whether you are righteous or wicked.

It is true that we will all experience physical death. However, we will not all experience spiritual death. There are some of us who have experienced new life, spiritual life. We have been born again by the spirit of God. Those who are not born again will experience physical death and then they will experience the second death. They are already physically dead but they will experience the second death, that is, the eternal separation from God.

Two definitions in the Bible for death. The one is the separation of consciousness from your body. The second definition is the separation of your consciousness from God. The separation of consciousness from your body is physical death. The separation of your consciousness from God is spiritual death. There are some people who are spiritually dead who are physically alive, some of you tonight. If you do not have a consciousness of God, if you don't live in that conscience awareness of God, if you don't take God into account in your life, if you're not actively seeking his guidance and his council, if you don't have fellowship and relationship with God, you are spiritually dead. Your consciousness is separated from God, you don't think about God in a close, intimate way. So you're dead, spiritually. But that separation from God will be eternal.

Those who do live through Jesus Christ, in a conscience relationship with God, in fellowship, communion, oneness, if we walk in the light as he is in the light then we have this fellowship with each other as the blood of Jesus Christ is cleansing us from all sin. You'll never die spiritually; you have eternal life, though one day, physically your spirit will leave your body. It will only be a metamorphosis for your spirit will move from this body into a new body. Paul the apostle said,

"We know that when this earthly tent (the body in which we presently live), goes back to dust, we have a building of God (a new building, a new house to live in), that's not made with hands and is eternal in the heavens. So then we who are still living in these bodies do groan earnestly desiring to be freed from the limitations of this body. Not that I would be an unembodied spirit but my desire is to be clothed upon with a body which is from heaven. For I know that as long as I'm still living in this body I am

absent from my Lord, that I would choose rather to be absent from this body that I might be present with the Lord”.

So the metamorphosis, Paul speaks of the necessity of the metamorphoses. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Therefore, this mortal must put on immortality, this corruption must put on incorruption.” The change, the metamorphosis, the change of body is a necessity to enter the kingdom of heaven. Where Solomon says he they all die so party it up man, wrong conclusion. There are some who die to be eternally separated from God and others who death is nothing more than just a metamorphoses. You’ll never be separated from God and from the consciousness of God.

For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: (9:4).

In other words, as long as you are alive you’re hope. When you are dead, it’s all over.

for a living dog is better is that a dead lion (9:4).

A lion is stronger than a dog and a dog would be no competition for a lion unless it’s dead. A living dog is better than a dead lion. Jesus said,

“Don’t fear those who can kill your body after that they have no power but rather fear him for after the body is destroyed is able to cast both your soul and spirit into Gahanna, yes that’s the one you should fear.”

The one who is able to cast soul and spirit into Gahanna, death after death; this is the second death, the scripture said.

For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know no any thing, neither have they any more reward; for the memory of them is forgotten (9:5).

As I said, Solomon is expressing opinions that are not biblical. “For the living know that they shall die:” (9:5) for the most part true. There are some people that don’t believe that they are going to die, they somehow think that they are immortal but they are not.

“For the dead know not anything” (9:5) not so. Job expressed the same feeling talking of his misery he said, “O that I were dead” where you are oblivious, where you know nothing, sort of in this void. It is interesting that when God came on the scene and began to talk with Job, the first thing God did was rebuke Job for all of the things that he was talking about of which he knew nothing, “Words without knowledge” God said. “Darken its council with words without knowledge” then God said, “Have you been beyond the gates of death? Do you really know what’s there?” He rebuked him for all this talking of stuff he didn’t know anything about.

Who do you suppose would really know about what happens after a person’s spirit leaves their body? I would say probably the most authoritative person in the Bible on that subject would be Jesus. I would say he would know quite a bit about what happened to a person after they were dead. What does Jesus say?

“There was a certain rich man who feared sumptuously every day. Moreover there was a poor man that was brought daily and laid at his gate, he was covered with sores, and he ate the crumbs that fell from the rich man’s table. The poor man died and was carried by the angel into Abraham’s bosom. Moreover, the rich man also died and in hell, Hades, he

lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and seeing Father Abraham afar off and Lazarus there being comforted in his bosom. He said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus to me that he take and put his finger in the water and touch my tongue for I am tormented in this heat. And Abraham said unto him, Son, remember that you in your life time had the good things and Lazarus the evil. Now he is comforted while you are tormented. Besides this there is between us a gulf that has been fixed and it's impossible that these that are here to come over there or for you that are there to come over here. Then I pray thee Abraham if he cannot come over here then send him back to my brothers and warn them lest they come to this horrible place. Abraham said, They have the law of the prophets that they will not believe them neither will they believe the ones that come back from the dead.

That's what Jesus said about consciousness as far as the dead are concerned. You see the real you isn't the body. When they place your body in the ground, that's not the end, you go on. Consciously your spirit continues to exist. Spirits are conscience and intelligent beings, angels are spirits, God is a spirit; angels are an embodied spirit except as when they choose to come in a bodily form, which they can do, but they are conscience beings, different bodies. As Paul says there are celestial bodies and there are terrestrial bodies. That is there are heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies. We have been living in an earthly body, someday we will have a heavenly body but you're still spirit. Just being in a different body you won't have as many material restrictions as this body.

So Solomon is expressing thoughts that are not Biblical.

but the dead know not anything, (9:5)

That's not true, they do.

neither have they any more a reward; (9:5).

That's not so. Paul said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness". Talking about he's going to die soon, "but there's laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, our righteous judge, shall give to me". There is a reward for those who have lived for God.

for the memory of them is forgotten (9:5).

That's probably true. You forget the dead after a few generations. I can't even tell you my great grandfather's names. I just don't know them, "the dead are soon forgotten" (9:5). My great grandkids probably won't know my name, if the world goes on that long.

Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; (9:6).

This is true that in death the corpse doesn't love you anymore, hatred and envy, it's all over.

neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun (9:6).

We will be coming back to live upon the earth for a thousand years with Christ. So we will have a portion in the kingdom age. Jesus promises those that overcome, that they will reign with him on the earth. Again, looking at things from a materialistic standpoint apart from God and apart from the knowledge of God.

Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works (9:7).

A conclusion of just to make the best of life because when you are dead it's all over, so make the best of life. Jesus said, "If you seek to save your life you will lose it, but if you will lose your life for his sake then you really find it". That was Solomon's problem. He tried to find satisfaction and fulfillment in this life, apart from a relationship with God, impossible.

Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment (9:8).

Just lavish things upon yourself.

Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity [emptiness], which he hath given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun (9:9).

Again that idea of exact what joys and pleasures that you can out of life because of the emptiness of it, that's all you are going to get, that's your reward, that's all she wrote for you.

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest (9:10).

Wrong. He's speaking from a purely human materialistic standpoint saying to do what you can and do the best you can because when you're dead it's all over. Where you are going in the grave, there is nothing there, no knowledge, and no wisdom in the grave where you are going.

The Bible, in the New Testament, tells us, "Whatever you do in word or deed do all to the glory of God". Solomon's big mistake is he lived his life for himself, for his own pleasures. These were the conclusions he came to, it's empty. Those following the New Testament exhortation, "Whatever you do in word or deed, do it to the glory of God" if you live for God's glory, you will find that your life will be very rich and very satisfying. If you live for your own glory, your life is going to be empty; you'll be like Solomon.

I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; (9:11).

So it doesn't matter how fast you are, how strong you are, how wise you are, how filled with understanding or how skillful as far as success in life. It's all a matter of blind chance.

but time and chance happeneth to them all (9:11).

The man who is fast might not win the race, the man who is strong might not win the battle, a man who is wise may not have bread, time and chance happened to them all. That again is purely worldly thinking and worldly philosophy and is sort of a fatalism.

The Bible said that God is control in our lives and "all things are working together for good" there is a purpose and plan of God for my life and nothing happens to me by accident. I don't live by chance. I live by divine appointments and God brings into my life those things that he knows are best for me. I don't subscribe to this philosophy of Solomon but I believe that God's hand is upon my life, has been upon my life and will continue to be upon my life bringing into my life that which he knows is best for me. Nothing happens to me by accident. It is appointed by God and it is intended for my good. All things, not some things, "all things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to his purpose".

For man also knoweth, not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them (9:12).

We don't know what time we might be taken. This is true; I don't know when I might be taken.

This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me: (9:13).

Now he goes into a new thought. This is the wisdom, I saw this and I thought this was great.

There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. Then I said, Wisdom is better than strength: (9:14-16).

Here's a powerful king, he comes and besieges the city, sets his bulwarks against it, but this poor wise little man he devised this strategy in which he delivered the city from the king but they forgot who he was.

nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard. The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good (9:16-18).

Observations of life, conclusions that he drew from those observations.

Next week we'll finish Ecclesiastes hopefully. We start out with dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to stink. We'll tell you what that means next week.

Solomon's philosophy was that of eat, drink and be merry, this is your portion in life. The Lord said,

“If you will come after me deny yourself and pick up your cross and follow me. For what will it profit you if you should gain the whole world and lose your own soul? What shall a man give in an exchange for his soul? For he who seeks to save his life will lose it but he who would lose his life for my sake shall find it”.

Different, diverse philosophy. There are many people who buy into Solomon's philosophy, life is a part, eat, drink and be merry because that's all you are going to get. There are people who are living very empty shallow lives following that philosophy. Like Solomon, they are becoming bitter and cynical. There are many who have opted for the philosophy of Jesus. Denying of self to take up the cross to follow him, they have found that life is rich, blessed and fulfilling.

I think of a couple of young men from our church. Steve Stump, who has gone over to Africa and ended up in Uganda, and God is giving him a tremendous ministry there. He has an intense love for those people. Wherever he starts to talk, on the street or whatever, he talks to people, a crowd will gather and listen to him. God has given him such an anointing and such favor among the people. Steve's been home for a while; he's going back in a couple to Uganda. A minister there and that calling of God, it is just a thrill to see his dedication and commitment. A young man, twenty years old, and yet giving his life for Christ over there.

We have another young twenty-year old, Mike Harris. He went over to Yugoslavia. God began to give Mike favour with the young people over there. Same kind of a thing with Steve, wherever Mike goes and starts to talk, kids congregate, they start to listen. He now has a Bible Study that just continues to grow. Several hundred young people coming now to hear him teach the word of God three nights a week. He's not coming home for a year or so. He's so excited over seeing God work and the Lord is using him in such a marvelous way that he plans on staying over there for at least a year. He hasn't told me that yet, he's told others. He's on staff here, I guess he's on staff, he's probably quit but I haven't been informed yet.

I am thrilled. Losing your life for Christ's sake, taking up your cross to follow him just thrilled that you can bear eternal fruit for God's glory. Lives that count are lives that are lived for Jesus Christ. Lives that are fulfilling are lives that are lived for Jesus Christ. Don't buy into Solomon's philosophy. You'll end up like Solomon, jaded, cynical, miserable and empty.

Live your life for Christ, follow Him, and the joy never ceases. May the Lord bless you as you walk with Jesus this week. May you experience the touch of His love and His power upon your life. May you have that beautiful consciousness of God as you submit your ways unto Him to walk in His path for His glory.