

Ecclesiastes 9:1 ¶ 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.

The tone of Solomon's writing seems to change again with this verse. This verse states a very precious truth to every child of God—God is in sovereign control regarding everything that is allowed to touch him/her; we are firmly in the grasp of His protective hand. I couldn't help but think of some of my favorite verses from the book of John in light of this truth.

John 10:27-30 "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."

That truth, however, does not mean that the righteous and wise will only experience love and not hate or good and not bad. Scripture affirms that good and bad (from our perspective) happens to both the one who has yielded to God as Lord in faith and the lost sinner.

Matthew 5:45 "...for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

John 9:2-3 "And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him."

Scripture is clear that only those who have yielded themselves to God as Lord are declared righteous, that wisdom comes from God, and that the wise fear God.

Isaiah 51:7 "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law...."

Isaiah 54:17 "This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is of me, saith the LORD."

2 Corinthians 5:20-21 "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

Proverbs 2:6 "For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding."

Psalms 111:10 "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom...."

Ecclesiastes 9:2 All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that

sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an oath.

This verse is an exclamation point to the conclusions stated in the previous verse. You can't judge a person's standing before God by his economic condition or the state of his health. The whole book of Job gives testimony to this truth. When you study the lives of the apostles, you find that they suffered persecution and lived simply. They weren't successful men according to the world's standards; they were hated more often than not. Those who preach the prosperity gospel today are ignoring a major portion of God's word and using most of the rest out of context. They are preying upon those who know little about the scripture and appealing to their desire for material blessing to promote their own lavish lifestyles. They are certainly not encouraging people to yield their lives to the Lord out of love for sacrificing His precious Son Jesus to provide our salvation.

Ecclesiastes 9:3-4 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. For to him that is joined to all the living there is hope: for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

In these verses Solomon is addressing the issue of death; it is inevitable for all—both good and bad. Human logic makes this observation with the attitude that the way you live makes no big difference in the scheme of things; you are going to die. So....it is far better to be a living dog (a lowly, despised creature) than a dead lion (a greatly feared and powerful creature). Those with spiritual wisdom, however, know that their choices in life have a direct impact on their eternal future. They know that without God that future will be miserable, but with God is eternal blessing. Scripture is very clear in this respect.

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Luke 16:22-26 "And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."

Revelation 14:9-10 "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:"

Revelation 20:15 *"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."*

Isaiah 64:4 *"For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him."*

Psalms 16:11 *"Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."*

Ecclesiastes 9:5-6 For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any *thing* that is done under the sun.

Using human reasoning it seems to be a valid conclusion that those who are alive have awareness of their state of being, while those who are dead have no awareness. The dead have no future. As shown in the comments on the previous verse, this is not true; death is not annihilation. As we continue on in this study, we will find that Solomon does not believe this to be the case either.

Jesus made specific reference to the fact that the patriarchs of old were still alive; physical death did not extinguish their being.

Matthew 22:32 *"I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."*

Though they have no portion in what is "done under the sun" currently; they have a future of blessing under the "Son."

Ecclesiastes 9:7-10 Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, 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. 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.

I can read this section of verses from two different standpoints—human and spiritual. I tend to think that Solomon is thinking more from the spiritual perspective since he is referencing God's approval of one's efforts to enjoy life. There is no reference to enjoyment of anything except that of which God would approve. The reference to always wearing white garments would seem to make

reference to clothing oneself in purity and righteousness. An anointed head would seem to be a reference to God's blessing upon one's life.

Revelation 3:4-5 "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment...."

Revelation 19:8 "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

Psalms 23:5-6 "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."

He also emphasizes a lifetime commitment to one's wife, so it would seem that he eventually came to understand the wisdom of God's purpose for marriage as stated from the beginning.

Genesis 2:24 "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

Solomon does, however, still reference this life as one of *vanity* (empty and unsatisfactory); and we know that from a spiritual outlook this is not true. He also references physical death as the "end of life" so to speak, and again we know this is not true. It is however, the end of all opportunity to act and choose regarding one's eternal destiny.

Ecclesiastes 9:11-12 ¶ 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; but time and chance happeneth to them all. 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.

These verses make some other valid observations about life on planet earth. Fleetness of foot doesn't guarantee victory in a race; strength and might do not guarantee victory in battle; skill and intelligence do not necessarily put bread on the table; intelligence, diligence and skill do not necessarily produce wealth; and expertise does not guarantee a beautiful product. I think the point being made is that knowledge, talent, skill and hard work do not guarantee success. "Time and chance happen to all"; as Solomon declares in Proverbs, "Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth. (Proverbs 27:1)"

Fish are susceptible to being caught in the net of the fisherman and birds in the snare of the trapper. The statement is not a reference to it being wrong to fish and hunt game for food, but it is obvious that the result is "evil" to the fish or bird that is caught/snared; the net or snare is the "evil." So too are the times in which we live called "evil." We live in times that have been cursed and made

evil by the choice of man to sin and rebel against his Creator. The “god of this world,” “the prince of the power of the air,” and the “father of lies” is Satan—the adversary of God and man.

2 Corinthians 4:3-4 “But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In **whom the god of this world** hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”

Ephesians 2:2 “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to **the prince of the power of the air**, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:”

John 8:44 “**Ye are of your father the devil**, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: **for he is a liar, and the father of it.**”

Ephesians 6:11-12 “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. **For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.**”

1 Peter 5:8 “Be sober, be vigilant; because **your adversary the devil**, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:”

The curse of sin not only leaves man vulnerable to the attack of wicked men and evil spiritual forces of darkness, it leaves man vulnerable to the effects of the curse upon the earth caused by acts of nature. God is still sovereign, however, and scripture records that He can and will intervene according to His purpose in protection and /or refinement of His own and in judgment of His enemies.

Ezekiel 14:21 “For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?”

Isaiah 48:10 “Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.”

In context here, however, I believe the reference is to the physical death of man. Just as surely as the fish or bird meets its end unexpectedly in the net or trap, so too is man subject to facing unexpected death. That truth should directly affect how we live—the choices we make.

Ecclesiastes 9:13-15 ¶ **This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me: 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.**

His words in the previous section evidently brought to memory an event that made quite an impression upon Solomon. The memory concerned a small city that was surrounded by the army of a great king who placed it under siege and built machine intended to help him break through the city walls. Evidently there was a poor but wise man in the city who devised a plan that defeated the intents of the enemy king and his troops, and the city was spared capture. You would have thought they would have hailed the man as a great hero; instead, he remained the unknown that he was before the siege ever happened. His wise intervention was soon forgotten.

This is a sad but true commentary on the ingratitude of man toward God as well as his fellowman. The mantra of the day is, "But what have you done for me lately?" That is why the Lord has to keep allowing trials and testings in the lives of His children; it is the only way He can keep them looking to Him in faith and provision to get them through their time of need. When times are good, we tend to get too busy with "more important" things in life than spending time in fellowship with Him and seeking to serve Him rather than self.

Ecclesiastes 9:16-18 Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: 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.

It seems as though Solomon understood that the wisdom of the poor is not usually appreciated. We have a tendency to pay more attention to one of strength, stature and standing. It is true that wisdom is more readily recognized and heeded when the surrounding atmosphere is conducive to listening. Those who are wise in their own eyes don't create such an atmosphere. Those who choose to ignore wise counsel deserve what they get as a result.

We are so in need today of people who are willing to listen to the wise truth of the Savior as recorded in His word and as declared by His true servants today. Instead, the masses embrace the foolish words of those who are wise in their own eyes.

"one sinner destroyeth much good" – Though we are all to blame for the apathy that has resulted in where we are as a nation spiritually and morally. I couldn't help but think of Madeline Murray O'Hair and her success at getting daily prayer and Bible reading taken out of our schools. Though she wasn't alone in the fight, she was certainly the very public voice behind the issue. Ultimately it was the Supreme Court that made the ruling that I believe began the spiritual downfall and moral decay of our nation.