

## **Joy and the Brevity of Life**

### **Ecclesiastes 9:1-10**

1. Introduction.
2. V. 1—Solomon’s observation and explanation.
  - a. 1a. – Solomon observes a broken reality in light of the sovereignty of God.
    - i. Sovereignty means God does whatever He pleases.
    - ii. Sovereignty means God is never reactive to anything outside of Him.
  - b. 1b. – Solomon concludes that since God is sovereign and man is not, man can’t actually know what God has ordained for him.
  - c. This verse is a statement of final cause—all things exist by God, and for God.
    - i. The point is that whether a you live a pleasant life or a difficult life, neither experience has any bearing on your relationship to God.
    - ii. Whether you experience much pleasure, or much suffering, it never has anything to do with how much God cares for you.
      1. Love and hate come to both the believer and unbeliever. It’s simply the result of living a life under the sun—a life which sits in the absolute control of a sovereign Creator.
      2. The love and hate (i.e., the good things and bad things of life) that may come to you are the result of God’s sovereign hand, and they’ve come to you for His purposes and His good pleasure.
  - d. The purpose of Solomon is simply to say—all of these realities are bound up in the mind God. No person has the ability to know what’s coming for them in life, and no one can ultimately explain why those things may come.
3. Vss. 2-3— One fate for all—death.
  - a. Death is Solomon’s greatest vexation.
  - b. No matter how righteous or wicked, there is no denying the fact that all share in this great end. This is the most twisted reality for Solomon.

4. V. 4—A proverb of hope.
  - a. To be alive, even if you have nothing going for you (“live dog”) is still better than to have obtained the world, but just be dead (“dead lion”).
  - b. “hope” is in reference to dreams and pursuits under the sun. When you’re dead, none of those desires and accomplishments will mean anything to you.
5. V. 5—The world quickly forgets you and your accomplishments.
  - a. Echoing back to chapter 1.
  - b. His point is that there’s little value in trying to make a name for yourself. The reality is you and your legacy will be forgotten within a generation or two.
6. V. 6—Temporary experiences are incredibly fleeting.
  - a. “love, hate, and zeal” is a phrase in reference to things in life which can sometimes become so all-consuming in the moment.
  - b. Temporary matters are just that—temporary.
  - c. Solomon’s trying to build an eternal perspective into our hearts.
7. Vss. 7-9 —The Commands.
  - a. Pursue happiness in food and drink (v.7).
  - b. Pursue pleasure in beauty (v.8).
  - c. Pursue joy in your marriage (v.9).
  - d. Pursue them with all of your might (v.10).
    - i. Solomon’s point is the brevity of life ought to motivate us to pursue life to its fullest.
    - ii. Life is a gift from God, but it’s also passing.
8. Conclusion

- a. Verse 7 contains a key phrase within the passage—“for God has already approved your works.”
  - i. This is a statement of justification and your standing before God.
  - ii. The point of Solomon is that knowledge of a right standing before God is the believer’s reason they should find a greater joy in life than an unbeliever.
    - 1. The implication is that joy comes, not from what you have or don’t have, but from your position before God.
    - 2. You are free to find enjoyment and pleasure in God’s gifts because God now finds enjoyment and pleasure in you.
  - iii. This is why the person and work of Christ is important. Faith in Christ is the only way we can have a right standing before God—where God actually takes pleasure in us (Matt. 3:17).
- b. Verse 4—Hope.
  - i. Psalm 104: 14-15.
  - ii. Regardless of how hard or bleak, life is always defined as hopeful. While you’re alive you experience God’s good gifts.
    - 1. All of God’s gifts are designed to point you to Him.
    - 2. Life is a fleeting window of opportunity, where God is calling us to understand that this temporary life is not ultimate—but eternity is.

**Small Group Questions:**

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. Why does Solomon keep returning to the theme of death? What is he trying to do?
3. What are some areas in your life that have become all-consuming? Are there things which occupy your thoughts (or perhaps create anxiety and discontentment) because you’ve made them an ultimate pursuit?
4. What are some structures you can put in your life to help you remember that life is short and temporary, and all pursuits mean nothing in the grand scheme of eternity?

5. Are there ways in which you're doing a poor job of enjoying life and rejoicing in God's good gifts? Where do you need to slow down and reflect on what God has given you, especially in the monotony and details of life?
6. Why is Christ important? What is your position before Him? And how often does your joy terminate on what He's given to you, as opposed to terminating on Him and His work?