

*Life on the Brink of Death*  
Ecclesiastes 9:1-18  
Reading: **Psalm 33:1-22**

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*Philosophy* is a lot like *fashion*. Just wait long enough, & good or ugly, it'll be back in style.

**Ecclesiastes** traces at least **four philosophies** that never seem to go away; Solomon *tried* them all on, & *nothing fit!*

1. **Materialism.** *The guy with the most toys wins!*
2. **Hedonism (Epicureanism).** *If it feels good, do it!*
3. **Humanism.** *Man (not God) is the measure of all things. You are the captain of your own soul! No such thing as sin. One of the first monuments to humanism was the **Tower of Babel!***
4. **Fatalism.** *The game is fixed – what's the point. The big shrug. Whatever..."*

Solomon learned the hard way, life won't be *meaningful*, if you *buy into these fashionable lies*.

**Please join me in Ecclesiastes 9.**

We've finally come to a point in **Eccl** where Solomon is about finished *exposing* the **futility** of *life under the sun* ( → *ignores God*).

We all face *death*, human philosophy *has failed us*, what can we *do*?

**How to live life on the brink of death.**

- 1.) **Be aware (1-6).**
- 2.) **Be blessed (7-10).**
- 3.) **Be humble (1-12).**
- 4.) **Be smart (but be warned) (13-18).**

*...pray...*

## Be aware (warned).

1. Israel's storied king has searched for *fulfillment*, far & wide, under the sun. Solomon has **examined** all of this, with **all his heart**: *materialism, hedonism, humanism, fatalism*. His search has led him back to the **God of the Bible**.
  - a. That will become *increasing clear* in the rest of **Eccl!**
  - b. Just last Sunday (8:16-17): *I gave my heart to know...I saw every work of God, I concluded that man cannot discover the work which has been done under the sun. **The hidden things belong to God!***
  - c. **Now** Solomon *goes on to say* that even for the **righteous & wise** (*faithful saints*), **be aware!** Life is filled w/ **uncertainty!** And even those things which are **certain**, can be *hard!*
  
2. The path of the saint (whom God *loves*) is often *uncertain* (v.1)!
  - a. Will it be *love*? August 18, 2019. Are you about to experience the **happiest week** of your life? *You don't know.*
  - b. Will it be *hate*? Beloved, does this week hold *adversity & trials & disappointment & loss* for you? Will the doctor say *cancer*, will the boss say *sorry*, will your husband say *goodbye*? *You don't know!*
  - c. What will this week look like on the *outside: love or hate*? It's completely **uncertain**. But please don't miss these **2 truths** (middle of v.1):
    - i. You are **God's – righteous & wise**, by faith in Christ.
    - ii. Your **God is in control** – you & your unseen future are *in His hand*.

3. **Uncertainty** is scary, but so are **some certainties!** Here is a somber principle (**read 2a**). Do I need to tell you **what** Solomon is so *certain* of!
- a. **Everyone dies!** *The righteous & the sinner* -Solomon is quite *comprehensive!*
  - b. **Solomon** understands there is **theological component** to life & death. The *personal & universal calamity* of death is tied to **sin (3)**.
    - i. *Human heart* → cauldron mixed w/ *evil & insanity, immorality & madness!*
      1. Why will someone look at you & say, *I know..but?*
      2. What is the *turning point* in Jesus' story of the **Prodigal Son** (Lk 15)? "*But when he came to his senses ...*"
      3. When you finally look *above the sun*, there is nothing **smart** about **sin!**
  - c. And then, *you die!* **But at least** (Solomon warns) **you know death is coming!** (**read v.4**) The *dog* & the *lion* = bad men & good (v.2 & 3).
    - i. The **lion** has *always* been the noble hunter, symbol of kings, *king of the jungle!*
    - ii. The **dog** roamed ANE village streets in packs: despised as a *scavenging, cowering cur.* (Fifi?)
    - iii. But Solomon is saying it's better to be a *live bottom-feeder* than a **dead rockstar!**
      1. Whatever the *dead rockstar* had, is gone! No more *passions* & no more *glories* & no more *opportunities.* Everything *under the sun* (this life) is **over...** **PAUSE**
4. How does this help me **live my life** on the *brink of death*? **Read 4a & 5a.**
- a. While you are yet alive, **God has spared you (v.1) to prepare for your inevitable death...for eternity!** Christ's arms are *open to you!*  
2 Pt 3:3-9 ...

Here is truth for *living life* on the *brink of death*: **life is unpredictable; death is unavoidable; God controls it all!**

## Be blessed.

1. The **Spirit's point** here is *preparation*, not *paralysis*. *Wisdom*, not *worry*. Beloved, **joy** is still on the menu! **Read 7-10.**
  - a. Solomon continues w/ a simple *command*: **Go!** = **Get going!**
  - b. Get out of the *mollygrubs*! Prepare for your *death*, but **enjoy** your *life*.
  - c. Solomon's commends God's blessings in **four rooms** of your life: *kitchen, closet, bedroom, workshop*.
2. **Read v.7.** What is your *fav dish*? The simple & daily pleasures of the **kitchen** were designed to be a blessing from God. Do you think God had to make *food taste good* to provide your *nutrition*? (The uni-veg?) **Instead...** *food* or *drink*? *Hot* or *cold*? *Sweet* or *sour*? *Mild* or *spicy*? *Dine in* or *carry out*? It is a *glory to God's* creativity & **love** that a simple thing like a meal can bring us so much *pleasure* ( → *happiness; cheerful heart*)!
3. **Read v.8.** What will you *wear* today? What's *hanging* in your **closet**? *White garments & pleasant perfume & carefully arranged hair* are tokens of *celebration & joy*.
4. **Read v.9.** I understand (**30+** years) that a *blessed* marriage is way more than the blessing of the **bedroom**!
  - a. What is the **primary purpose** of marriage; why did God **invent** matrimony? *Procreation*? *Efficient stewardship*? **Knock off** your *rough edges*? Turn w/ me to **Gen 2:18** (Good? Not good! Alone. Corresponding!) If the priority in your marriage is not **companionship**, something is *wrong*. You are missing the *blessing*!
    - i. Did you see all the **happy ideas** in **v.9**? **Enjoy life, love, God's gift, your reward**? (In the face of *toil & labor*...)
    - ii. *Did you catch the practical theology* of the blessing of *marriage*? Who gave you your spouse? **God!**

- b. I understand (30+ yrs) that a *blessed marriage* is way more than the blessing of the *bedroom!* But it isn't *other*. God invented **sex**, & sex *guided by God's commands* (w/in marriage) is an essential ingredient of the *blessed companionship of marriage*.
- c. I want to stop & make an important point from this principle. Who **invented** marriage? How does he **define** it here ( & Gen 2; 1 Cor 7; everywhere else in Scripture)? **Between a man & a woman**.
- i. **Gen 2:24** – *For this reason a man shall leave his father & his mother, & be joined to his wife; & they shall become one flesh.*
  - ii. And *this* is just as certain: Our Father offers forgiveness & transformation & joy & hope & acceptance to sinners who turn to Christ from every walk of life (lifestyle).
5. **Read v.10.** We've moved to the *shop*. God invented *work*, too! Pursue your work with all your *might*. Just because your responsibilities seem *ordinary* or *difficult* doesn't mean you should pursue them *apathetically*. Swindoll says, *Go for broke!*
- a. The **motivation** for daily *passion* (incl *workplace*) is an echo of **v.6** (read; then **10.b** – *for there is no activity...*).
  - b. Here is the *reason*: **death** (**Sheol, grave**) *is the end* of this life's *opportunities & responsibilities*. This truth is esp *pointed* if you are living life, *only for this life....only under the sun*.
6. **OBTW** – Did you catch Solomon's promise in **v.7**: *God has already approved your works!* How so?
- a. **V.1** – God's **approval** is for the *righteous & wise* (by faith).
  - b. **V. 4a & 5a.** – God's **approval** is for those prepared for *the inevitable!*
  - c. **VV.7-10** – God has made the blessings of the *kitchen, closet, bedroom, workshop* for His children. He **approves** of *these things!*
7. How does this help you **live life** on the **brink of death**? → No one is better prepared to *seize the day* (enjoy these *blessings*) than the woman or man who is *convinced* that **God** is in control, & who is *prepared* for **death**. **If you are faithful & prepared**, then *go!* enjoy **this life** while you wait *confidently* for the **next one!**

## Be humble.

1. Do you think you're *invincible*? Do you *assume* you have another **50** years? "Preacher, you won't live long enough to *bury me!*" Don't *bet on it, son!*
  - a. **Read vv. 11-12.** *Calamity & no escape & treachery & suddenness* are the **dark notes** in this **short warning**. Solomon is still examining *life on the brink of death*. I guess he's worried that you didn't get his *point...*
  - b. And we're still looking *under the sun* → **life lived w/o factoring in God**. That kind of philosophy inevitably leads a *thinking man* to *despair*. **W/o a Creator & Sustainer & King**, there's no *control* or *purpose*.
2. Apparent *advantage* doesn't seem to matter. **V.11** gives *five ironic examples*: *athlete & soldier & scholar & investor & specialist*. Solomon's tone is *emphatically negative (not...)*!
  - a. All this *advantage*, and still...*championships & wars* are **lost**, *hunger strikes, fortune & favor slip away*.
  - b. Here's *all* you can say, if you're still only looking *under the sun*: no man is immune to *bad timing & bad breaks!* **V.11 – time & chance** go together to express one gloomy idea: *something bad!*
  - c. *Something bad* happens, & your advantage might be *no advantage*, at all.
3. **Trouble never comes at a good time**. No matter how *strong* or *smart* you think you are; you probably won't even *see calamity coming!*
  - a. **V.12** is an *explanation* of **v.11**. Solomon uses **2** interwoven *similes*: *like a fish; like a bird*. All the hunter does is spread his *nets & wait* for his *careless prey*.
  - b. So it is w/ the *son of men*. *You don't know your time*. You put your **keys** in the switch & assume it's just another **trip to the store**, but you *never ever* return to the *kitchen* with those *groceries...*

4. There is some *above the sun* truth here that the Spirit wants you to see!
  - a. Since you can't put your confidence in yourself, put your *confidence* in the Lord. *The king is not saved by a mighty army; a warrior is not delivered by great strength. A horse is a false hope for victory; nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength. Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him, on those who hope for His lovingkindness.* (Psa 33:16-18)
  - b. You don't know your **time** but *God* does! *My times are in Your hands.*
5. How does this help you **live life** on the **brink of death**? Friend, you aren't *Superman* & you aren't *Methuselah*.
  - a. *Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God...*
  - b. **Don't put off** what *really matters*, beloved! Don't waste your life on **small causes**.
  - c. Jesus said, "*We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work.*" (Jn 9:4)

**Bad things** happen, & the **timing** is never good, & and you never see it coming, & **no one** is immune! Make God your refuge & your strength.



**Be smart (but be warned).**

1. Solomon has one last word of *wisdom*. It's **band-aid** wisdom – it only sees life *under the sun*. So it's *limited*, but it's *not bad* – in fact Solomon was very **impressed** – read **13-18**.
2. Wise king Solomon begins w/ war story (maybe even a *true* story)! War is one those **bad things** that you *don't always see coming*.
  - a. A *small* city **vs.** a *powerful* king. No one would have given a *nickel* for the little town's chance of *survival*.
  - b. Then from one of the *poorest hovels* of this little village comes a *man w/ a plan!* And it *works!*
  - c. There is a story in the **OT** like this: **2 Sam 20** - **David** the King sent **Joab** the General to stop **Sheba** the Rebel. Sheba *holed up* in Abel Beth-maacha. Joab *surrounded* the city & *threw up* siege ramps & *attacked* the walls. It was only a *matter of time!*
    - i. But there was a **wise woman** in Abel Beth-maacha. **Read 2 Sm 20:16-23**.
    - ii. Did you catch the **wise woman's** name? **Me neither!** No one remembers...
3. The *futility* of *forgetting* is another theme in **Ecclesiastes**. Wise people are *forgotten*, wicked people are *forgetten*, & lessons go *unlearned*.
  - a. So even though *wisdom trumped* *military might* in Solomon's war story – the *real hero* is soon forgotten.
  - b. And *evil* doesn't go away for long.

4. Solomon is still thinking about his *story* in **v.17** – *the poor wise man & the war-cry of the king*, leading his army of *wicked fools*...
  - a. Wisdom **was better!** Better than the *plans of an evil king*, better than his *swords & siege engines*.
  - b. But all of man's wisdom is *limited*...
  - c. Solomon's story is a *warning*, not a *celebration!* All our wisdom is never *bullet-proof* in this life! Just as **one** *wise man* turned back an **army of evil**; so just **one** *determined sinner* can destroy a **great deal of good**.

It's good to be **smart**, but just be **warned!** Despite the value of *all your wisdom*, people won't necessarily *pay attention (appreciate)* and *sin* still does its *damage* in our *fallen world*.

Mike Wittmer has written a book entitled, *The Last Enemy* ( → ??? ):

*You are going to die. Take a moment to let that sink in. You are going to die. ... Friends and family will gather to celebrate your life, and after you're buried they'll return to the church for ham and scalloped potatoes. Soon your job and favorite chair and spot on the team will be filled by someone else. The rest of the world may pause to remember—it will give you a moment of silence if you were rich or well known—but then it will carry on as it did before you arrived.*

**Eccl 9:2** – *It is the same for all. There is one fate for the righteous & the wicked.*

**Eccl 9: 12** – *Man does not know his time...*

I'd like you to go home today wrestling w/ **one question**, in light of these **eternal truths**:

*How can I prepare myself & my family for our **inevitable departure** from life "under the sun"?*

*...pray...*

**Preparation for eternity** begins w/ *repentance & faith* in Jesus Christ.

- Jesus **died** bearing the sins of His people!
- God **raised** Him from the dead on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day. He offers you *new life*, too!
- Are you *in Him*, now?