**Biblical Soul Care**
**Lesson 11: How to live the good life before you die**
**Ecclesiastes chapter 9:1-10**

**Introduction:** The message of Ecclesiastes (and the Bible) is that enjoying God's good gifts glorifies God! Enjoying, not worshiping, the things of earth, helps us to worship God. In "Living Life Backwards", David Gibson tells us, "God takes pleasure in your pleasure. He has given it to you". Just as you take pleasure in watching your children (or grandchildren) enjoy and delight in gifts that you give them, so God takes pleasure in you delighting in and enjoying His good gifts! The good gifts can become snares if we try to get more out of them than God has designed or we turn them into gods and worship and serve them. Gifts are gifts, not gods. In Ecclesiastes 9, Solomon urges us to keep this perspective and to relish and take joy in the gifts God gives us to enjoy while we live this 'under the sun' life, which is but a vapor. Solomon urges us to take a full swing at enjoyment and live the good life before we die!

**The mystery and unpredictability of God's Sovereignty: 9:1-3**

So I reflected on all this, attempting to clear it all up. I concluded that the righteous and the wise, as well as their works, are in the hand of God; whether a person will be loved or hated—no one knows what lies ahead.
**2** Everyone shares the same fate—the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the ceremonially clean and unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not. What happens to the good person, also happens to the sinner; what happens to those who make vows, also happens to those who are afraid to make vows.
**3** This is the unfortunate fact about everything that happens on earth: the same fate awaits everyone. In addition to this, the hearts of all people are full of evil,
and there is folly in their hearts during their lives—then they die. **NET**

**Verse 1-**

The righteous and the wise have no guarantee that their deeds will produce a smiling providence. Although they are in the Sovereign hand of God, sovereignty is not predictable. Borgman

**Verse 2-**

**Verse 3-**

In the Sovereignty and Providence of God, the events yet to come in a person's life 'under the sun' remain unknown until they unfold in time. Solomon says that the righteous and wise will rest in this confidence, that God controls what happens – He is Sovereign!

**The benefits of living over dying: 9:4-6**

**4** But whoever is among the living has hope;
a live dog is better than a dead lion.
**5** For the living know that they will die, but the dead do not know anything;
they have no further reward—and even the memory of them disappears.
**6** What they loved, as well as what they hated and envied, perished long ago,
and they no longer have a part in anything that happens on earth. **NET**

As we go through these verses and Ecclesiastes, we need to look beyond just this book and look to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the promise of the resurrection. Ecclesiastes does not have all of the answers, nor does it claim to. This is not the kind of book that we keep reading until we get all the answers, but the kind of book that helps us know how to serve God when we do *not* have all the answers. It is part of a larger book that gives answers to many of the questions that Ecclesiastes only begins to address. **We always need to read Ecclesiastes in the context of the whole Bible.**

**Verse 4-**

**Verse 5-**

**Verse 6-**

The question left hanging at the end of these verses is this: how shall we then live knowing we are going to die? Verses 7-10 are Solomon's attempt to answer that question with the wisdom that he was given and under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

**Let's take a look at "How to live the good life before you die". 9:7-10**

Go, eat your food with joy,
and drink your wine with a happy heart,
because God has already approved your works.
**8** Let your clothes always be white,
and do not spare precious ointment on your head.
**9** Enjoy life with your beloved wife during all the days of your fleeting life
that God has given you on earth during all your fleeting days;
for that is your reward in life and in your burdensome work on earth.
**10** Whatever you find to do with your hands, do it with all your might,
because there is neither work nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom in the grave,
the place where you will eventually go. **NET**

This section is not some resignation to the meaningless of life with the only path being to anesthetize oneself with pleasure. This is a call to full-orbed sanctification. God's will for your life is to enjoy this life. God commands you to enjoy this life, in the *hebel,* in the mystery, in the sadness, and even in the pain. Qoheleth is going to lay down some seriously spiritual advice here. So buckle up and prepare to receive the profound spiritual counsel from the sage of sages. Borgman

**Verse 7-**

Food is the gift of God, and good tasting food is the good gift of God. God takes delight when we enjoy His gifts. So kick death in the teeth by marinating the ribeyes, lighting up the barbeque, and baking the potatoes (using butter and sour cream). Don't forget a salad for conscience's sake and enjoy it all to the glory of God. Don't over-eat and abuse God's gifts but enjoy the food that He has given (1 Timothy 4:4-5). Borgman

**Verse 8- Be a Joyful Person**

The prescription for really living before you die is to be a joyful person!

**Verse 9- Enjoy your spouse!**

Marriage is an elixir in our death row cell under the sun. It is part of our portion, our reward, in the midst of toil. Since that is God's design, there ought to be a sanctified indulgence in the joys of marriage. Borgman

Remember marriage is not what completes you. It is Jesus Christ who completes you. So enjoy the good gifts that God has given you in Christ!

18 Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth,
19 a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight;
be intoxicated always in her love. Proverbs 5:18-19 **ESV**

Question: What keeps us (you) from enjoying your spouse?

Question: In what ways are you enjoying your spouse?

Question: What should you do if you are not enjoying God's gift to you in the person of your spouse?

**Verse 10- Be an Earnest Person**

Jonathan Edwards 6th resolution: "Resolved, to live with all my might, while I do live."

What does it mean to be earnest?

Can you identify areas of your life that you are living half-heartedly?

When we enjoy God's gifts, God is glorified. We are commanded here in this section of Scripture to enjoy our food, be a joyful person, enjoy our spouse, and to be an earnest person. To live like this is to put death to shame!

God's gifts to us are a precursor to a new heaven and a new earth, where we will enjoy all of God's gifts and blessings without the specter of death peering over our shoulders and without the pain that *hebel* brings. These gifts, and more, will be better and brighter, and they will be ours if Jesus Christ is ours. If Jesus Christ, God's greatest gift, is ours by faith, then all the lesser gifts in this life "will grow strangely *bright* in the light of His glory and grace." Then in the life to come, all of His greatest gifts will be enjoyed with no more tears, no more pain, and no more death. Borgman

Then Death and hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death--- the lake of fire. Revelation 20:14 **NET**

**17** for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Revelation 7:17 **NKJV**

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying: "Look! The residence of God is among human beings. He will live among them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death will not exist anymore---or mourning, or crying, or pain, for the former things have ceased to exist." Revelation 21:3-4 **NET**