

God's Sovereignty Over the Fate of Men

Ecclesiastes 9:1-10

George Ngan

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Death is certain for all. This holds true for both the righteous and the wicked. One other certainty is that the outcome of all our deeds is in the hand of God. How do we deal with life given these truths?

I. One Fate for all Men (vv. 1-3)

All outcome of man's deeds is in the hand of God. This is King Solomon's statement after he reflected and pondered on life. It does not matter if one is righteous and wise. Romans 9:14–16, 'What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be! For He says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion." So, then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.'

Solomon then mentioned five oppositions or contrasts: the righteous and the wicked, the clean and unclean, the man who offers a sacrifice and the one who does not, and then the good man and the sinner, and lastly the swearer and the one who is afraid to swear. Still, it will be the same for all – all will die.

Clearly Solomon knew about his own depravity to say this. He knew that the hearts of men are full of evil and insanity. For it is because of sin that man is doomed to die. Romans 5:12, 'Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned -' Death is inevitable because all sinned.

II. Hope for the Living (vv. 4-6)

Death, though unpredictable, is certain. Still there are advantages for those who are physically alive over those who had died. For one, the living could always hope for better days to come. Then, Solomon said, 'surely a live dog is better than a dead lion.' (v. 4b). In biblical times, unlike today, dogs are treated with contempt. Dogs are scavengers and were considered defiled or unclean. On the other hand, lions were perceived as majestic beings, which possess power and kingship. And so, being alive, even if you have nothing, beats one who has everything but is dead. The dead cannot enjoy what they have.

Still another advantage of the living is that they have an awareness that they will die. This gives them the opportunity to consciously prepare for death. For death is not the end. After we die there is judgment (Heb. 9:27). We shall all be judged by God, and the outcome will depend on how you lived your life. If you surrendered your life to Christ, Jesus said you will spend eternal life with Him in His kingdom. But if you reject Him, you will suffer eternal condemnation in hell (John 3:16-18).



We only have this opportunity to believe in the Lord Jesus and surrender our lives fully to Him while we are still alive. When death comes, that opportunity is gone.

III. Enjoy the Life God has Given You (vv. 7-10)

As for the dead, even if they have built a strong legacy, this too will soon be forgotten. Solomon's fitting conclusion is for us to seize the day or the opportunity that God has given us, knowing that one day we will die.

Solomon, the Preacher, cites three things given us by God to enjoy. There is the enjoyment of the necessities of this life (v.7). This includes the basic needs that God has provided through the fruits of our labor like food, shelter and even health. Blessings from God, in whatever way or form, is meant to be enjoyed with gladness in our hearts (Prov. 10:22). This is not to say we indulge ourselves in wanton pleasure. Rather, we are to share what we have with the needy, especially those who are our brethren. 1 Timothy 6:17–19, 'Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.' Remember that we are mere stewards of God's resources (Luke 12:48). We have the responsibility to use what we have for the sake of the church and the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the glory of God alone.

Solomon also instructed us to enjoy the blessings of marriage. God was the One who designed and instituted marriage. He meant it for man and woman. Paul said in his letter to the Ephesians, "husbands love your wife as Christ loved the church". Paul also said, "wives be subject to your husbands as the church also subjects or submits itself to Christ". Marriage is meant to be enjoyed and cherished. This is our reward in life.

Since we all are going to die, we should enjoy what God has blessed us with. Be it our family, business, career or our ministry. This also means that we learn how to deal with life during troubled times or difficult situations so we can still enjoy it. Instead of soaking in self-pity and depression, choose to look at the good things that the Lord has blessed you with.

As children of God, even if we try our very best to be wise and to be faithful in our walk, it does not mean that the outcome would always be favorable to us. There will be times that we will be confronted with much difficulty and suffering. Are we to question God why He allows the righteous to suffer in their righteousness? And why do the wicked get to enjoy what they have amassed through illegal means? We should know that our fate is in the hand of God. We must submit to His sovereign will in our lives, whether during times of adversity or times of prosperity. We trust God, because He knows what is best.