

**Intro:** Page 557. My second year of grad school, [I had a major revolution take place in my life. It was not an emotional or spiritual revolution though. This was completely physical. Let me explain. If my memory serves me correctly, I had just returned from a road trip to see family, which meant I spent a considerable amount of time on I-40, rolling from Kentucky back to North Carolina. On that trip, I finally realized that it was taking me a really long time to read the road signs, and after the encouragement from some friends, I decided to go get a vision test. Now, I thought I had 20/20 vision, but you won't be surprised that Dr. Eileen Walsh tells me, "Yeah, buddy, we've got a problem. I can't believe you've never had a vision test before now. You are myopic." I said, "Mywhat?!" "Myopic. You're nearsighted, which means you can see what is right in front of you with ease but have significant issues seeing things in the distance." So here's the revolution: (perhaps some of you can identify with this) when I walked out the office that evening with my new contact lenses, it was if I entered a whole new world. I had entered the world of high definition: every limb and every leaf on every tree. Every star in the sky. Every color, especially on neon signs, looked totally different. Everything was so clear and crisp and defined, to the point when I went back in for my check up I told my doctor, "If God hadn't called me to ministry I would become an optometrist."

Now, I want you to take my experience and turn it into a parable of sorts. I believe we all, no matter if you are a follower of Christ today or a person who has not yet believed in Christ, we all have a tendency to see what is in front of us more clearly, but not see what is in the distance all that well. We get so caught up in the here and now, that we do a pretty poor job of looking at the there and then, but what I want to encourage us with this morning and where we were going in Ecclesiastes 9 is this: the clearer we can see into the distance, the greater the possibility for revolution in the present. In Ecclesiastes 9 we're going to look at.

**"Enjoying Life with the End in View"**  
**Ecclesiastes 9:1-18**  
**April 29, 2012**

The beginning of verse 1 reminds us of the Preacher's wholehearted quest. He says, "all this I laid to heart." This statement seems to look forward and look back. Remember, he is describing his intense pursuit to discover meaning and satisfaction in life. He is seeking to find a reason to live in an unreasonable world, and we have already seen where his journey has taken him: money, sex, pleasure, fame, power, work, wisdom, you name it, the Preacher again and again says, "Been there. Done that. Finding ultimate satisfaction in this life is like going outside this afternoon and trying to chase the wind. It's an exercise in futility. It is all vanity." Now in chapter 9 he's going to teach us another lesson in wisdom. He says:

**The Point: Live life to the full understanding the preciousness of time.**

Trans: Chapter 9 begins with a familiar refrain. He is going to continue to encourage us to...

**I. Wrestle with the reality of death (9:1-6).**

- **Read 1-6.** So he says in verse one: "the righteous and the wise and their deeds..." He is basically saying: the righteous are in the hands of God. Nothing happens to them that doesn't pass through the hands of God, and yet that does not guarantee that life will be pleasant or difficult. In fact, both love and hate, both ill and good are before us.
- While that may be uncertain, one thing is incredibly certain: death. The Preacher has been giving us some heavy doses of our mortality all throughout the book of Ecclesiastes. He has talked about it in Chapter 2. Chapter 3. Chapter 5. Chapter 6. Chapter 7. Chapter 8. & now, in Chapter 9, he will give us his final thoughts on death.

*Death is inevitable.*

- Check **verse 2.** The categories emphasize the universality of death. The same fate comes to all: the moral and immoral, the religious and irreligious, rich, poor, ballas and nerds. We're all going to die.

*Death is not the way it's supposed to be*

- **Verse 3.** Why is the reality of death and the reality of sin within us evil? Because sin & death were not the part of the deal in the beginning. Check Genesis 1 & 2. Sin, and consequently death, enter the story in Genesis 3, and we've been living in this fallen world ever since. Thankfully, God sent his Son, Jesus Christ to deal with our sin and deal with death in order to redeem us back for God. What's so significant about the cross? We have the death of death in the death of Christ, and listen to this (deep end stuff here), that addresses both the personal spiritual reality and the cosmic reality. This is what we saw in Colossians last fall. I hope you haven't forgotten. Feel free to podcast those. I think we're up to seven subscribers! ☺ Don't hate! Jesus died to reconcile all who believe to himself and to reconcile all things, in other words, Jesus will reverse every nasty effect of the fall and bring total restoration in the new heavens and the new earth, and just live it was in the beginning, so it will be in the end, sin and death will no longer be part of the deal. That's what is coming, but what about today?

*Death should push us to life.*

- Dude, Tanner, what are you talking about man? Verses 4-6, encourage us to live life to the full while we have opportunity. They challenge us to live with a sense of purpose and urgency because time is running short and the finality of death is real. (**verses 4-6**)
- Let's make sure we didn't miss the end of verse 6: One day we will "perish" and "forever \_ have no more share in all that is done under the sun." The game will be over. The end of the story will be written. The fat lady will have sung. Now, remember, he is dealing with "all that is done under the sun." He is examining life as it is lived under the horizon of this world. The reality of eternity is not in his gaze at this point. He is dealing with the now not the next. **P**
- So, what does death teach us? What are the benefits of wrestling with and understanding the reality of death?
- The reality of death should bring a sense of clarity and urgency to life. When we realize that the clock is ticking and only has a limited number of ticks, we begin to evaluate that which is truly important and enduring. It also compels us to live with a sense of urgency and make our lives count.
- Ephesians 5:15-16 says: "**Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.**"
- Are you making the best use of the time? Do you count each day as precious and seek to maximize it for God and his glory? Are you living with the end in view? Or are you myopic, nearsighted, only living for what is right in front of you?
- Jonathan Edwards wrote a discourse in December of 1734 entitled, "The Preciousness of Time." It was his meditation on Ephesians 5:16. Listen to what he writes: "**There is nothing more precious, and yet nothing of which men are more prodigal (recklessly wasteful). . . . If men were as lavish of their money as they are of their time, if it were as common a thing for them to throw away their money, as it is for them to throw away their time, we should think them beside themselves, and not in the possession of their right minds. Yet time is a thousand times more precious than money; and when it is gone, cannot be purchased for money, cannot be redeemed by silver or gold.**"
- How? Commit what you do to God. Pray. Ruthlessly evaluate your calendar. Listen, we all need a little leisure time and rest, but if we combed over the time we spend that is a mindless waste whether that's our morning commute or the amount of hours we spend on various forms of technology and entertainment, I'd venture to say we are often quite prodigal, quite wasteful with our time. And here's how Satan works... (as Edwards points out). He deceives us in a variety of ways:
- To the young he says, "You have your whole life ahead of you. You have so much time, why bother with making the most of the time?" To the old he says, "Most of your life is past. You have so little time, why bother at this point with making the most of the time."
- But when we wrestle with the reality of death, we begin to see the preciousness of time. Our impending death, whether that's 5 years or 50 years from now, bids us to make the most of our time.

*Trans:* We not only need a really clear handle on the end of our life, we also need to get a handle on how we should live today. So the Preacher changes his tone in vv. 7-10 and presents “an alternative vision of life.” (Bartholomew) In light of the reality of death, he tells us to

## II. Enjoy the everyday experiences of life (9:7-10).

- He begins verse 7 by saying, “Go!” It serves as a wakeup call. In light of the reality and finality of death, we better get to enjoying life with the quickness. How? Let me give us four ways... and notice this is commanded joy...

### 1) *Have a good meal (7).*

- “Eat your bread...” I know some of you are on that no carb, low carb diet, but come on now, you gotta get that bread in every now and then. (Salvatore’s...)
- When you sit down to eat a meal, do you enjoy it?
- *Pic:* My dad needs to hear this. He just devours food. After a few bites, that guy is either done or looking for seconds. He won’t even take a drink until after a meal, crazy!). For him, eating is a forty-yard dash, not a stroll through the park...
- Wine, coffee, tea, a coke... whatever, enjoy it as a gift and trust that God is down with that. The end of verse 7 says, “for God has already approved what you do.”
- How do we know God is down with this? Well, we go back to the first two chapters of the Bible and see that God created us with not only the need for food, but also gave us great variety for our enjoyment.
- I know some of you all are Food Network junkies, and others are simply food junkies. It don’t matter if it’s American cuisine, Italian, Chinese, Japanese, Thai, Indian, it don’t matter...
- But before we move on, I want to make one more observation about a good meal.
- It’s even better when you do it with others... Go out with friends. Grab a meal after church (connections class). Practice hospitality. Live life in community. Get below the surface in conversation and enjoy friendship as a gift from God.

### 2) *Rock some reflective gear (8).*

- I’m not talking about going out and buying some night gear that runners like our boy Aaron King might have worn when he was training for the Boston Marathon. You’ve seen people late at night or early in the morning with their reflective vest and pants with the reflector stripe down the sides...
- The idea of white garments and oil on our head gets at the idea that our clothing and appearance ought to reflect how we are enjoying life.
- In the ancient world, “when people were distraught they showed it by wearing sackcloth and putting ashes on their head (2 Sam 13:19). When people were joyful they showed it by wearing *white* clothes and putting *oil* on their head.” (Greidanus, 233) (cf. Mt. 6: fasting...??)
- Take a shower, brush your teeth, put some lotion on, get a cup of coffee, get prayed up, look presentable and respectable, and live a full day! (My closet... Marsha’s outfits...)
- Some people take pride in trying to look like a slob. The Preacher says, “Dress in such a way that reflects how you are enjoying the life God gives.”

### 3) *Enjoy life with a good wife (9).*

- **Verse 9.** Here’s some good advice. Wives, this certainly applies to your husband.
- Contrary to popular opinion or at least popular culture: marriage is a gift that is an enjoyable gift. It is a gift to be enjoyed.
- God made us with the capacity for deep relationships. Relationships are to be enjoyed and in God’s economy, the marriage relationship tops the list, horizontally speaking.
- This is why this is the second most important decision someone can make is who they will marry, especially if you take the view that marriage is a covenant and not some selfish experiment.
- Enjoy your spouse. Be all in. God has given you that husband, that wife, so that the best of your relational energy, love, faithfulness, and conversation could be channeled to this person, “your portion,” and no one else! Got it?

- And then notice, he says, “And in your toil at which you toil under the sun.” It’s about to get dicey up in here. . . He connects marriage with toil. Work... Marriage is not a walk in the park...
- It is work, but these verses teach us that God has designed it to be a beautiful and enjoyable journey.
- Let’s work harder at our marriages than we do at our job, and it’s okay to measure that qualitatively rather than quantitatively. Speaking of our jobs, verse 10 teaches us to.

#### 4) **Work hard on the job (10).**

- Principle of work ethic.... Address Procrastination, Address laziness, College students???
- Make the most of every opportunity to get a task or project done...
- Do it with all your might. Give it all you got. Git’r done. And git’r done with excellence. Why? Why should we work with all of our might and display commitment and passion on the job? Here’s some motivation: no work, no thought, no knowledge, no wisdom in sheol....
- Sheol, in the Jewish mind, was the place of the dead.
- Again, he says, “You’ve got one shot at this thing. Make the most of it.”
- This would also assume, it seems, a measure of enjoyment in our work, for how would we do something with all our might if our heart was not in it?

**Summarize: So what is the point of vv. 7-10. Enjoy life. Enjoy the life God gives. Let’s be honest, so much of the time, we would be hard pressed to say we are enjoying life to the fullest extent. Jesus came. Jesus lived. Jesus died that we might have life, a joy-filled, increasingly abundant life. And this joy runs deep... You won’t get this by joining the ...** “The Secret Society of Happy People encourages the expression of happiness and discourages parade-raining. Parade-rainers are those people who don’t want to hear your happy news.” [www.sohp.com](http://www.sohp.com)

**Motto:** If you're happy and you know it ... tell somebody! If someone else is happy and they know it ... listen! **Members:** Thousands from at least 34 countries.

**“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)**

### III. Go hard after the prized possession of wisdom (9:11-18).

#### Read 11-12

- sometimes we get the breaks, sometimes we miss the breaks, but there is a sovereign God over all the times, events, and details of our lives....
- Sometimes calamity comes out of nowhere...
- Again, we must remember that he is reflecting on life in our fallen world. Now **verse 13ff**

To tie this section together with the previous, we could say that the way to enjoy life to the highest degree is to pursue the life of wisdom. Our relationships, our vocation, our everyday actions will be enhanced by walking the path of wisdom, and here he gives us an example of how wisdom triumphs over might. There is a little city under siege with only a few people surrounded by a great king with great siegeworks. Militaristically speaking, they are toast. BUT Against all odds, the poor, uncelebrated, unnoticed, man delivers the city.

The surprising superiority of wisdom...

- We would expect to discover wisdom from the seat of rulers rather than the quiet words on the fringes of society, but verse 17 tells us in proverbial fashion: “
- We would expect to advance our cause through human strength, not the simplicity of wisdom.

#### Conclusion

The truth is: I probably needed corrective lenses for months or years before I ever realized I needed. Begin with the end. Pray. Response: “It is Well with My Soul”