

Facing Death?
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Ecclesiastes 9:1-10

Let's talk about things we enjoy. If you could dine on any kind of food you wanted today, what kind of meal would you have? If you could take your family to any destination where would you go? Where would you go if it were just you and your spouse? If you could do a "dream job" for just a day, what job would it be?

Here's the real question: Do you enjoy life or do you endure life? Depends on the day, right? If you kept a calendar and answered honestly would most days be "enjoyed" or "endured?" In other words, what is your pattern of enjoying life.

You probably noticed the title of our study is "Facing Death?" That sounds like the makings of a cheerful Sunday morning study! Don't let the title throw you. This is actually an encouraging text. Yes, we all have an appointment with death someday unless the Lord returns first. In either case God has given us a life to live until we leave. He's also allowed us to decide *how* we will live that life.

Here's the truth that should change us: We're all leaving this world someday. Will we endure or enjoy the life God has given us? The wise person will gratefully enjoy it or as Chuck Swindoll put it we will, *"Have a blast while we last!"*

Ecclesiastes 9:1–10 (ESV) — **1** But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God. Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him. **2** It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. **3** This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. **4** But he who is joined

with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. **5** For the living know that they will die, but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. **6** Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun.

- Verse one: Our life is in God's hands and only He knows how it will unfold (His Sovereignty.) We talked about this in our study of chapter seven.
- Our faith is on display when we trust God in light of His Sovereignty.
- Verse two: *"The same destiny [death] ultimately awaits everyone, whether righteous or wicked, good or bad...religious or irreligious."*ⁱ
- As the Greek poet Euripides wrote, *"...to die is a debt we must all pay."*ⁱⁱ
- In verse three Solomon said many fill their lives with "madness." Faced with the reality of death the unwise often choose depravity over legacy.
- They live by mottos like: YOLO (You only live once...go for it!) or *"Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die."* That must be a good plan; it's in the Bible, right? Yes, it is, but that's not the context!
- For many unwise people it is like an old country song from the 1950's: *"I'm gonna live fast, love hard, die young, and leave a beautiful memory."*
- Solomon has a better recommendation for us in a few verses.
- Also in verse three Solomon said it seems unfair that everyone dies.
- Remember, when this was written God the Father had not yet revealed His plan for reconciling sinful people to Himself through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. As wise as Solomon was, YOU know something he didn't know. You know about what awaits Christ-followers when this earthly life is over.
- Solomon's view was only of this earthly life and what we can do with it.
- Verse four: *"As they say, 'It's better to be a live dog than a dead lion!'"*ⁱⁱⁱ

- All of Solomon's poetic eloquence amounts to this: everyone dies.
- But in verse four he cracks the door a bit to reveal some encouragement with the words, *"There is hope only for the living."*
- If you grew up in South Carolina as I did you know that the state "motto" is "dum spiro spero" a Latin phrase meaning, *"While I breathe, I hope."*^v
- As long as we're breathing, there is hope and opportunity. Each day is a blank canvas God has given us on which to paint our lives. What colors will we use? Will our painting be hopeful or hateful? Will we enjoy the life God has given us or endure it with gritted teeth until we breathe our last?
- Solomon advises us to do more enjoying than enduring.

7 Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do. **8** Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head. **9** Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. **10** Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going.

- When faced with the reality of death, Solomon says enjoy life.
- Enjoy fun, fellowship, and family. Find joy in your work and your hobbies. God has "approved" this kind of enjoyment.
- People approach life in many ways. Materialism – Money and toys will make me happy! Epicureanism – Enjoyment comes from tasting the finer things in life. Humanism – It's all about me and what I want. I am the *"master of my fate and captain of my soul."*^v Fatalism – We're all going to die so what's the point?^{vi}
- How is Solomon's advice different than any of that? How is his advice in contrast to the "madness" (depravity) he observed in v.3?
- Warren Wiersbe writes, *"Solomon didn't urge us to join the "jet set" and start searching for exotic pleasures in far away places. Instead, he listed some of the common experiences of home*

life: happy leisurely meals (v. 7), joyful family celebrations (v. 8), a faithful, loving marriage (v. 9), and hard work (v. 10).^{vii}

- The pandemic forced us to slow down. Some people have felt trapped while others have felt “cocooned.” Some have endured while others have enjoyed the simple pleasures of home, family, quietness, and nature.
- Solomon, this sounds nice like a Hallmark Channel movie, but life is hard! Why isn’t this advice ridiculous given the challenges of real life?
- Let’s apply this text to followers of Christ. Does Solomon’s advice contradict what the church has taught in verses like these? **Matthew 6:19–20 (ESV) — 19** “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, **20** but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. **1 John 2:15–17 (ESV) — 15** Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. **17** And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. **John 17:16 (ESV)** They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.
- Does Solomon’s advice to enjoy life contradict those verses?
- What sin are those verses warning Christ-followers about? Why is Solomon’s advice to enjoy life different from the warning in those verses?
- Ponder this: Is it a sin NOT to enjoy the things Solomon says to enjoy?
- Another question: Is it a sin to be a “grumpy” follower of Christ?
- Before you answer that, how would you define “grumpy?” How does it differ from sad, depressed, or angry?
- Grumpy is defined as “annoyed and irritable. Synonyms: bad-tempered, crabbed, crabby, cross, fussy, grouchy, ill-tempered.”^{viii}
- That’s different from being sad, depressed, or even angry. Scripture surely acknowledges those are legitimate emotions for God’s children.

- Grumpy is a state of being irritated about things big and small. It's complaining about almost everything. Nothing suits you. You give everything and everyone a "one star" rating. You can't be satisfied.
- You know that "Dad joke?" *"Sometimes I wake up grumpy --- sometimes I let him sleep!"* I know, it's corny but some people can relate!
- We all have our grumpy moments. That's life as a human being. So, let me rephrase my question: Is it a sin for a Christ-follower to STAY grumpy?
- If I've been given eternal life forever and "good gifts" from the Father and yet I constantly gripe, complain, and find fault, have I sinned?
- We've all met two personality types in life among Christians.
- We've known someone who has gone through great tragedy and sorrow and yet we see them raising hands in praise to God, a picture of pure joy.
- Then there is the person who has been blessed abundantly and yet they never seem to have joy even in church!
- *"The choir was off key; the pastor went too long; the temperature was too hot (or cold;) that person took my regular seat!"*
- Galatians 5:22 says, "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness," Which of those two does that describe?
- Not sure if you're a "grumpy" Christian? Ask your spouse or a friend.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- We're all leaving this world someday. Will we endure or enjoy the life God has given us? Solomon says the wise person will gratefully enjoy it!
- If we've trusted Christ as Savior and Lord we not only get to enjoy THIS life, we get Heaven too! That's what Jesus called the "abundant life."
- Solomon wasn't being unrealistic about the difficulties of life. He fully acknowledges there will be seasons of trials and sadness.
- How should we deal with those? 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18 tells us: **16 Rejoice always, 17 pray without ceasing, 18 give thanks**

in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

- Though life has its sad chapters, most of the book of our life can be enjoyed with gratitude. Most days allow us the opportunity to enjoy life’s simple pleasures and blessings. That’s especially true for Christ-followers.
- This week let’s commit to NOT be a “grumpy” Christian.
- Instead let’s enjoy the blessings God has given us.
- As Swindoll said, let’s *“Have a blast while we last!”*

ⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ec 9:2).

ⁱⁱ https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/euripides_377739

ⁱⁱⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ec 9:4). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

^{iv} https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dum_spiro_spero

^v <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/51642/invictus>

^{vi} Adapted from “Life on the Ragged Edge” by Chuck Swindoll. Word Publishing 1985.

^{vii} Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Satisfied* (pp. 109–110). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

^{viii} <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/grumpy>