

The Opinion's of others have always been important in the lives of people. A democracy is built upon the idea that what people think about their leadership matters...

Even as individuals... we put a **LOT** of stock in how other's think and feel about us...

We care about how they view our clothes, our hair... the way we walk.....

What they think of our car....our house..... our kids.....

But today... Solomon is going to lead us to consider a far more weightier question..... one that we too often neglect.....because we are so consumed with what other people think of us....

that is...

### What Does **God** Think of You?

The first thing he wants to show us from Eccl. 9.... is...

#### 1. No One's Opinion is More Important

While what people around you think of you.... and feel about you.... can often hurt ....or make us feel really good.... at the end of the day.... their opinions are not ultimately DETERMINATIVE of our destiny.....

But God's opinion of us is..... His opinion of us.... is the **ONLY** one that really matters.... Here's why:

#### **Ecclesiastes 9:1a**

" 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**.

Remember last week we (as we finished up Chapter 8) we heard Solomon say that no one can really discover **what God is up to** in the world..... No human being is that smart.....

Now ... he says..... but I'll tell you this.... God holds our lives entirely in His hands....

So, true faith in God begins with the reality that you are **not**... and never will be **in control**.

Perhaps you have seen the Insurance commercial where a few normal looking young people are involved in some catastrophe.... whether it be an car accident.... or a buffalo ramming their car ...or it getting stolen.... They sing that magic song..... "Like a good neighbor... state farm is there.."

And **Presto**.... an agent appears..... ready to grant whatever they wish....

Those commercials are **ABSURD**.... are they not? Completely unrealistic....

Yet.... we **LOVE** them.... We LOVE the idea that we can somehow harness some supernatural power to UNDO evils that happen to us.... or to make our lives HAPPIER.... when we are down...

In short.... we want to be in **CONTROL**..... of our destiny.....and of our affairs...

But the reality is ....we are NOT..... **God is**..... We are in entirely **in HIS hands**.....

### **Deuteronomy 32:39**

"See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand."

We'll see that in the end.... in God's hand ... is the **BEST** possible place we could be...

What Does God Think of You?

## 2. Don't Base it on Your Experiences

Most relationships in our culture are **performance** driven.... The phrase "what have you done for me LATELY" is indicative of how we usually feel about others....

If they are **good** to us.... we LOVE them..... If they are MEAN to us....or they don't do what we **want** them to.....

We hate them.....and we assume they must **hate us**....as well...

In v. 1 Solomon has been speaking of the wise...the righteous.... those who TRY to live in a way that pleases God.... He says... we are in HIS HANDS....

Yet... judging from the way God seems to treat us in this life..... it is HARD to tell whether he LIKES us or **NOT!**

### **Ecclesiastes 9:1**

" 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."

Would God allow someone he **LOVES**..... get cancer?

Would He give a guy He HATES the best job in the company?

Can God LOVE my family, if every time my wife gets pregnant the baby DIES?

If you **just** look at the EXPERIENCES of your life (esp. as compared to others)...much of the time.....you will find nothing but CONTRADICTION and INCONCLUSIVE evidence as to whether you are in God's hand for **GOOD**... or for **EVIL**...

Because the EXPERIENCES of our lives.... **do not seem to differ much at all**... from those who don't even believe in God... much less try to follow Him....

### Ecclesiastes 9:2-3

"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 is the good, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all."

- The SAME thing happens to everybody! says Solomon...

No matter whether you are good...or evil..... **crack addict** or deacon..... whether you **give** sacrificially out of your income.... or you are a HOARDER of money....

Whether you join the **Peace Corps**..... or create a Ponzi scheme.....

SAME THING happens to all... You **Die**.

If I do not cut my yard for several weeks....it will grow to be over a foot high....

In that yard... it will become evident that MANY different types of plants are growing there..... **Dandelions**... with their big ugly leaves.... some Kentucky 31 bluegrass..... Lots of CLOVER..... some **crabgrass**...and some buttercups scattered around....

But once we crank up the mower..... no matter whether it is good grass or weeds.... it all has the same fate.... **MOWN** down all together as one.

Kind of like all of us in the human race.....

(TEV) paraphrases Solomon's response to this reality ...:

That's just WRONG!

“That is as **WRONG**...as anything that happens in the world....”

Cold, hard reality of life.....The SAME event happens to everybody....

God tells us why:

**Ecclesiastes 9:3b**

....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."

Your **heart** might not be as evil as some people you know.... but compared to the **purity** of who God is....your heart... and your children's heart....can not be described as anything **but** evil...

Jeremiah says the heart of man is DESPERATELY wicked... who can know it....

We are born sinners.... and the **MADNESS** of sin that is operational in our lives..... increases as we grow up.....

we use new intelligence to sin in better ways.....

We use new found freedoms to try and avoid getting caught in our sin.....

And because **ALL** have sinned and fall short of the glory of God... and the WAGES of sin is death.....-> **all DIE**.

Mark this down:

**Death** is the ONLY consistent .... **VISIBLE**.... measurable.....predictable.... cause and effect dynamic going on between God and the human race.....

You have heard the old saying... there's only two things for certain... death and taxes.... but really.... there is only **one**... and that is DEATH...

God explains why that is.....

**Romans 5:12**

" Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men **because** all sinned—"

So ... perhaps you are here today and you have never before made the connection between **your sin** and the fact that you are going to DIE one day.....

God wants you to understand that....

He is not **haphazard** in His treatment of the world.... We are ALL under a curse... because we have ALL sinned.....

So.....The SAME event happens to all.....

Worst of all... we have no idea **when** DEATH is coming... to us... or to ones we love...

Solomon laments:

**Ecclesiastes 9:12**

"For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them."

Death is the ultimate weapon of God to show us we are NOT in control.....

While he takes no pleasure in death (even the death of the wicked).... He uses it to bring a DISORDER into the world.....

That makes us **QUESTION**.....

- What **DOES** God **really** think of us??

Solomon goes on....

**Ecclesiastes 9:4-6**

"But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. 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. 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."

The worst thing about death.... (Solomon says) is that you LOSE everything you have had in this life...

As real and lasting as all your emotions SEEM right now....

Soon they will be Dead, buried and forgotten.

I met people all the time here in our area.... that say....

I just don't **THINK** about death....?

Perhaps there might even be someone here today who that is your philosophy....

Well... because God doesn't want your SOUL to perish in ignorance and unbelief...

God has also brought DISORDER and UNPREDICTABILITY to the **specific, daily** experiences of our lives....

### **Ecclesiastes 9:11**

" Again I saw that under the sun the race is **not** to the swift, nor the battle to the **strong**, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all."

Most religions have **Guru's**..... experts to whom everyone looks to impart wisdom and help predict the future....

**Statisticians** have become the Guru's of the Sports World.

In **baseball** alone, which it is believed was the first sport where statistics were compiled and analyzed...

A coach, opposing player, or just a regular fan.... can obtain highly detailed information about the **likelihood** of a certain player or team to do any certain thing....in any certain set of conditions.... on any certain day of the year.....

A guy who runs the 60 in 6.5 seconds.... is THIS MUCH more likely to steal a base off of this pitcher / catcher combination.....

An offensive tackle who can bench 300 lbs... is THIS MUCH more likely to prevent his quarterback from being sacked....

We **LOVE** that kind of cause and effect.... don't we?

Parents love to believe that if their child scores 790 in every category on her SAT's she SHOULD get into Harvard....

We **LOVE** to have **CONFIDENCE** regarding the likelihood of something happening....

But this verse tells us (what you have also OBSERVED)..... a lot of times... it just **doesn't** happen that way....

The FAST guy trips and falls.... the STRONG guy is out maneuvered by a squeaky safety...

The smart girl has some emotional meltdown occur in her life and her grades plummet....

Because..... part of the curse of sin upon our planet.... is that **GOD** has thrown a **monkey wrench** into the predictability of CAUSE and EFFECT.....

So that (from our perspective) life seems to be **one** HAPHAZARDLY occurring mess.

Solomon laments.... "but instead of what we would EXPECT... time and chance happen to them all..."

**God** does that.... in hopes that we will STOP trying (in vain) to find **comfort** in life's regularity.....because it does **not** currently.... EXIST.

and **THAT** it by design...

You can not DISCERN whether or not God loves you.... by what **happens** to you.... or by what does **NOT** happen....

I was praying yesterday for some of you whom I know **LONG** to be married..... Bible says... that is a GOOD desire.....

Don't give up on that... if it is the desire of your heart.....

But if you don't currently see anyone on your horizon..... don't make **THAT** your daily basis for whether or not God loves you....

Because GOD has so ordered our reality.....

That He wants you to base your apprehension of How He feels about you....

on ONE indisputable and **unchangeable** fact:

### **Romans 5:8**

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

**Nothing** in THIS life will make sense to you.....and I mean NOTHING.....

Until you understand and believe that Almighty God.... who dwells in heaven and does WHATEVER He pleases has chosen to **arrange ALL of History**.....including my life and yours.....

AROUND the **DEMONSTRATION** of His mercy and LOVE for us in the person of His son.... Jesus Christ...

WHILE you were dead in trespasses and sins.....

WHILE you were an enemy of God... (both by birth and by choice.....)

WHILE you deserved nothing but wrath.....

GOD decided to put the incredible DEPTH of His love for you on display.... by sending you a **RESCUER**.... you did not even know existed...

By sending you a **SALVATION** which could not have been accomplished any other way.....

So....

**THE** exclusive way... on any given day.....or month..... or year.... to determine what God thinks of you.....how He feels about you is this....

(insert 1<sup>st</sup> person singular.....if you are a believer..)

#### **Colossians 1:13-14**

"He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his **beloved** Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Do you GET that?? That you deserve to remain in the domain of darkness... under God's wrath.... but in **LOVE**..... God **chose** to adopt you..... He called you by name.... and brought you **OUT** of darkness..... through the gospel.....

He TRANSFERRED you into the Kingdom of His **BE-LOVED** Son....

So that, at this moment.... believer.... (try to take this in) ... every **OUNCE** of the LOVE God has for **His Son**.... is conveyed to you through your faith in Jesus.....

You are ....**DEEPLY** loved.

even though.... by nature.... you were in fact... **UN-LOVABLE**

God wants you to **KNOW** that personally.... and intimately.....

through rejoicing in the good news of the gospel..... you are to REMIND each other of that..... in singing and thanksgiving!

Some of you need to just **camp out there** for a while.....

You need to DRINK in God's specific choice to set His love upon **you**.....

As evidenced by bringing **you** into the HEARING of the gospel... by which He imparted saving faith to **your** soul.... and called **you** into eternal fellowship with Himself....

If you came in here this morning..... FED UP with life.....

CONFUSED.... maybe even bewildered by all the BAD stuff that has come your way....

You need to get your eyes off of trying to make sense out of all of that.....

And turn your eyes upon Jesus.....**SEE** God's love for you....forever on display through the GIFT of His Son...

But for **others** of you.....

You are like..... yeah yeah.... I **got** that.....

I want YOU to know that your GIFT giving God has not stopped there.....

What Does God Think About You?

### 3. Check Out **ALL** of His Good Gifts

Both April and I.... enjoy the love language of someone SERVING us....

The best thing I can do for her is to clean the kitchen.....

She knows I feel the same way....

Some days... she has worked hard to get our bathroom clean.... and all the laundry done....and food on the table when I get home....

And I am so SWAMPED with something ELSE that is on my mind... it is like I am in a fog.....that I don't even notice.....

Can you relate?

That is **also** how we miss all the GOOD gifts God gives us every day.....

We are so immersed LAMENTING how things have not gone our way.....

Or WORRIED about what MIGHT happen....

That we overlook them.... and fail to recognize Him as the Giver of every perfect GOOD and perfect gift....

Solomon (led by the Holy Spirit) had some sense of that.....

That ALL the good things in life....are **POINTERS** to a GOOD and Loving God...

and so not to RECEIVE them as such.... and not to ENJOY them with all our soul.... is something of a slap in His face....

**Ecclesiastes 9:7**

" **Go**, eat your bread in joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already **approved** what you do."

.....- These are not suggestions ....they are a series of imperative **commands**

And while Solomon might have enjoyed life to some degree.....

You who are IN Christ Jesus..... have been LIBERATED from the guilt and condemnation of sin... so that you can ENJOY life to the **fullest!!**

You might not be the richest person in town..... you might not be anywhere close to the best looking....

There might be a lot of difference in where you would like to be and where you are in **many** areas of your life....

But as you look around at whatever **GOOD** portion you find in your life.....Paul wants to ask you where did those come from?

He says:

**Romans 8:32**

"He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him **freely** give us all things?"

**IN** Christ Jesus.... not only do you have an eternal inheritance.... but God has given you the CAPACITY...

to **FREELY** enjoy every good thing God gives you to **eat**.....

If you drink a glass of wine.... (with a clear conscience) do it with **JOY!**

For God has been PLEASED to give these things to you..... and it glorifies Him when you enjoy them to the **fullest!**

**Ecclesiastes 9:8-9**

"Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head.

**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."

Many things about marriage are not easy.... Blending the lives of two sinners into one .... has many bumps along the way....

But it glorifies your Gift Giving God....men.... to recognize that **your Bride** is God given....

The companion of your youth..... is custom designed to **SATISFY** you.... **as you delight in God's goodness to you both WITH her!**

When you go on dates (which it is your job to initiate).... don't let ANYTHING distract you from **FULLY enjoying** her company.... find ways to thank God for specific things about her... and communicate them to her....

Today is my 18<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. I still can't believe April married me...

She is **MY portion**.... and I am so thankful to God for her...

Whatever your portion.....if you are IN Christ Jesus..... I assure you that God is dispensing **evidences of His grace** and mercy upon your life... in tangible ways.....

So that you can ENJOY them to the fullest.....

So that you can KNOW the infinite degree of LOVE He has for you ... His child.