

CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

Ecclesiastes Chapter 9 — The Same Fate for All and the Value of Wisdom

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

Ecclesiastes Chapter 9 continues the Preacher's sober examination of life under the sun.

The chapter brings together several major truths:

God's sovereignty.

The certainty of death.

The value of the present life.

The importance of diligent work.

The unpredictability of earthly outcomes.

The superiority of wisdom over strength.

The destructive power of sin.

The Preacher begins with a profound statement:

“The righteous, the wise, and their deeds are in the hand of God.”

That truth gives stability in a world where circumstances often appear uncertain.

We may not know:

What tomorrow will bring.

Whether people will love us or oppose us.

Whether our plans will succeed.

How long our lives will continue.

But God knows.

The chapter then reminds us that death is the shared earthly destiny of all people.

The righteous die.

The wicked die.

The wise die.

The foolish die.

The rich die.

The poor die.

That reality could lead to despair.

But the Preacher reaches a different conclusion.

Because life is brief:

Live it.

Receive God's gifts.

Eat with joy.

Enjoy marriage.

Work diligently.

Use the opportunities you have while they remain available.

Verse 10 gives one of the most practical commands in Ecclesiastes:

“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your strength.”

The chapter also warns us against assuming that ability guarantees success.

The fastest runner does not always win.

The strongest army does not always prevail.

The wisest person does not always become wealthy.

The most skillful person does not always receive recognition.

Unexpected events affect human life.

Finally, the Preacher tells the story of a poor wise man whose wisdom saved an entire city.

Yet afterward:

No one remembered him.

That story proves two things.

Wisdom is powerful.

Human recognition is unreliable.

The central truth of Ecclesiastes 9 is:

Because death is certain and earthly outcomes are unpredictable, we should live faithfully, enjoy God's present gifts, work diligently while opportunity remains, and value wisdom more than strength, status, or human recognition.

I. THE RIGHTEOUS AND WISE ARE IN GOD'S HAND

Ecclesiastes 9:1 — God Holds What We Cannot See

“So I reflected on all this and declared: the righteous, the wise, and their deeds are in the hand of God. Yet no one knows whether love or hatred awaits them; all lies ahead unseen.”

The Preacher has been studying:

Justice.

Wisdom.

Righteousness.

Human suffering.

God's work.

His conclusion begins with security:

The righteous and wise are in God's hand.

That does not mean they will understand everything that happens.

It means their lives are not outside God's knowledge and rule.

Human beings cannot see everything ahead.

God can.

Cross References

Job 21:22

Can anyone teach God knowledge, since He is the One who judges even those who hold the highest positions?

Proverbs 16:9

A person may make plans in his heart, but the Lord ultimately directs the course of his steps.

Isaiah 55:8

The Lord says, “My thoughts are not the same as your thoughts, and your ways are not the same as My ways.”

Spiritual Principle

The future may be hidden from us, but it is never hidden from God.

Key Truth

We do not have to know everything ahead when we know whose hand holds us.

II. THE SAME EARTHLY FATE COMES TO ALL

Ecclesiastes 9:2 — Death Does Not Show Favoritism

“Everything happens alike to all: the same fate comes to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the clean and the unclean, to him who offers sacrifices and to him who does not. As it is with the good man, so with the sinner; as with the one who takes oaths, so with the one who fears them.”

The Preacher is speaking about the common earthly reality of death.

Death comes to:

The righteous.

The wicked.

The religious.

The irreligious.

The careful.

The careless.

This does not mean their eternal destinies are identical.

The point is that earthly mortality comes to everyone.

Cross References

Ecclesiastes 2:14

The wise person sees where he is going, while the fool walks in darkness. Yet I realized that the same earthly end eventually comes to both.

Matthew 5:45

God causes the sun to rise on both evil and good people, and He sends rain upon both the righteous and the unrighteous.

Job 9:22

From the limited viewpoint of earthly suffering, Job said, “One thing seems to happen to everyone: both the blameless and the wicked eventually face death.”

Spiritual Principle

Earthly circumstances do not always reveal a person’s standing before God.

III. THE CERTAINTY OF DEATH EXPOSES HUMAN EVIL

Ecclesiastes 9:3 — Then They Join the Dead

“This is the great evil under the sun: the same event happens to all. The hearts of men are full of evil, and madness fills them while they live; then afterward they join the dead.”

The Preacher combines two realities.

Human beings know death is coming.

Yet many still spend life pursuing evil.

That is one of the great tragedies of human rebellion.

Sin creates spiritual madness.

People live as though death will never arrive.

Then suddenly:

Life ends.

Cross References

Psalm 49:12

A person may live with honor and wealth, but he cannot remain on earth forever. In death he becomes like the animals that perish.

Hebrews 9:27

Every person is appointed to die once, and after death comes judgment.

Ecclesiastes 2:16

Neither the wise person nor the fool will be remembered forever. Eventually both are forgotten, and both must die.

Spiritual Principle

Knowing that life is short should lead us away from sin rather than deeper into it.

IV. WHILE THERE IS LIFE, THERE IS HOPE

Ecclesiastes 9:4 — A Living Dog Is Better Than a Dead Lion

“But anyone who is among the living has hope—for a living dog is better than a dead lion.”

In that culture:

The lion represented strength and honor.

The dog was often regarded as lowly.

Yet the Preacher says:

A living dog is better than a dead lion.

Why?

Because life means opportunity.

While a person lives, there is still time to:

Repent.

Believe.

Change.

Serve.

Reconcile.

Learn.

Obey God.

Cross References

Isaiah 38:19

The living person is the one who can praise You today, just as I am doing. A father can teach his children about Your faithfulness.

John 11:25

Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. The person who believes in Me will live even though physical death comes.”

Job 14:7

Even a tree has hope. If it is cut down, it may sprout again and produce new growth.

Spiritual Principle

As long as God gives you another day, another opportunity remains.

Application

Do not waste the opportunities that belong to the living.

V. THE LIVING KNOW DEATH IS COMING

Ecclesiastes 9:5 — Earthly Opportunity Ends

“For the living know they will die, but the dead know nothing; they have no more reward, and their memory is forgotten.”

The Preacher is describing earthly participation under the sun.

The living know:

Death is coming.

That knowledge can produce wisdom.

Once death comes, earthly work and earthly reward come to an end.

The verse is not denying conscious existence beyond death.

It is describing the dead person’s separation from ongoing earthly activity.

Cross References

Psalms 6:5

In death a person no longer participates in remembering and praising You among the living on earth; in the grave, earthly opportunities for worship and testimony have ended.

Psalms 146:4

When a person’s breath leaves, his body returns to the earth, and on that very day his earthly plans come to an end.

Hebrews 9:27

Every person is appointed to die once, and after death comes judgment.

Spiritual Principle

The knowledge that death is coming should make present opportunities more valuable.

VI. EARTHLY INVOLVEMENT ENDS AT DEATH

Ecclesiastes 9:6 — No Longer Sharing in Life Under the Sun

“Their love, their hatred, their envy have vanished; never again will they share in anything done under the sun.”

Death ends earthly participation.

The deceased person no longer:

Works.

Competes.

Builds.

Owns.

Argues.

Plans.

Participates in earthly affairs.

The Preacher wants the living to understand:

Your opportunity is now.

Cross References

Job 14:21

A man's children may receive honor or fall into disgrace, but after his death he no longer participates in those earthly developments.

Psalms 49:17

When a wealthy person dies, he takes nothing with him, and his earthly glory does not follow him into the grave.

Ecclesiastes 2:18

I became frustrated with everything I had worked for under the sun because I knew I would have to leave it to the person who came after me.

Spiritual Principle

Do not postpone indefinitely what God has given you opportunity to do today.

VII. EAT YOUR BREAD WITH JOY

Ecclesiastes 9:7 — Receive Life Gratefully

“Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a glad heart, for God has already approved your works.”

The certainty of death does not lead the Preacher to hopelessness.

It leads him toward gratitude.

Eat.

Drink.

Be thankful.

Receive the ordinary blessings of life as gifts.

Cross References

Ecclesiastes 2:24

There is nothing better than for a person to eat, drink, and find satisfaction in his work. I saw that this ability to enjoy life comes from God's hand.

Ecclesiastes 3:13

Everyone should eat, drink, and enjoy the good that comes from his labor, because this enjoyment is a gift from God.

Deuteronomy 12:7

There before the Lord your God, you and your households will eat and rejoice in everything you have worked for, because the Lord your God has blessed you.

Spiritual Principle

Gratitude turns ordinary provision into meaningful enjoyment.

VIII. LIVE WITH GLADNESS

Ecclesiastes 9:8 — White Garments and Oil

“Let your garments always be white; and do not let oil be lacking on your head.”

White clothing and oil represented:

Joy.

Celebration.

Well-being.

The Preacher is encouraging a life that receives God's blessings rather than remaining consumed by despair.

Cross References

Revelation 3:5

The person who overcomes will be dressed in white clothing, and I will never erase his name from the book of life but will acknowledge him before My Father and His angels.

Psalms 23:5

You prepare a table for me even while enemies are around me. You honor me by pouring oil upon my head, and my cup overflows with Your goodness.

Revelation 19:8

The bride was given clean, bright, fine linen to wear, and that linen represents the righteous deeds of God's people.

Spiritual Principle

Recognizing life's brevity should not remove joy.

It should make godly joy more intentional.

IX. ENJOY LIFE WITH YOUR WIFE

Ecclesiastes 9:9 — Marriage as God's Gift

“Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of this fleeting life that God has given you under the sun—for this is your portion in life and in the toil you labor under the sun.”

Marriage is presented as one of God's gifts within a brief life.

The Preacher says:

Enjoy the relationship.

Love your wife.

Share life.

Do not become so consumed with work that you fail to enjoy the person God has placed beside you.

Cross References

Proverbs 5:18

Let your marriage be blessed, and rejoice continually in the wife you married in your youth.

Proverbs 18:22

The man who finds a good wife finds something truly good and receives favor from the Lord.

Genesis 2:24

For this reason a man leaves his father and mother, joins himself faithfully to his wife, and the two become one.

Spiritual Principle

Relationships should not be sacrificed on the altar of endless labor.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Do not become so busy making a living that you forget to enjoy the life God has given you.

X. DO YOUR WORK WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH

Ecclesiastes 9:10 — Work While Opportunity Remains

“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your strength, for in the grave, where you are going, there is no work or planning, no knowledge or wisdom.”

This is one of the great practical statements of Ecclesiastes.

Do what is before you.

Do it diligently.

Do it wholeheartedly.

Why?

Because earthly opportunities are temporary.

A day comes when your earthly work is finished.

Cross References**Colossians 3:23**

Whatever work you do, do it wholeheartedly as though you are serving the Lord rather than merely working for people.

John 9:4

We must do the work of the One who sent Me while there is still opportunity. The night is coming when earthly work can no longer be done.

Galatians 6:9

Let us not become tired of doing what is good, because at the proper time we will harvest the result if we do not give up.

Spiritual Principle

Faithfulness uses present opportunities rather than assuming tomorrow is guaranteed.

Key Truth

Do today's work while today's opportunity still exists.

XI. THE FASTEST DOES NOT ALWAYS WIN

Ecclesiastes 9:11 — Time and Unexpected Circumstances

“Again I saw under the sun: the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to the skilled—but time and chance happen to them all.”

Human ability does not guarantee outcomes.

The fastest runner can lose.

The strongest army can be defeated.

A wise person can remain poor.

A skilled person can be overlooked.

Unexpected circumstances affect life.

The phrase “time and chance” describes events from the human viewpoint that arrive beyond our planning or control.

It does not deny God's sovereignty.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 9:24

You know that in a race everyone runs, but only one receives the prize. Therefore, run with disciplined purpose so that you may finish well.

Psalms 33:16

A king is not saved simply because he has a great army, and a mighty warrior is not rescued merely because he possesses great strength.

Proverbs 21:31

The horse may be prepared carefully for the day of battle, but final victory belongs to the Lord.

Spiritual Principle

Ability matters.

Preparation matters.

But outcomes are never completely under human control.

XII. NO ONE KNOWS WHEN TROUBLE MAY COME

Ecclesiastes 9:12 — Suddenly Caught

“Moreover, no one knows his time. Like fish caught in a net, or birds trapped in a snare, so men are ensnared when evil times fall suddenly upon them.”

Trouble can arrive unexpectedly.

A fish does not know when the net is coming.

A bird does not know when the trap has been set.

Human beings likewise do not know every future crisis.

Cross References

Luke 21:34

Be careful that your hearts are not weighed down by sinful living, drunkenness, and the worries of life so that the coming day does not suddenly catch you like a trap.

Proverbs 29:6

An evil person becomes trapped by his own sin, but a righteous person can rejoice and live with confidence.

1 Thessalonians 5:2

You know very well that the day of the Lord will come unexpectedly, like a thief arriving during the night.

Spiritual Principle

Because life can change suddenly, readiness is wiser than presumption.

XIII. THE PREACHER SEES A GREAT EXAMPLE OF WISDOM

Ecclesiastes 9:13 — Wisdom Worth Remembering

“I also saw this example of wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me.”

The Preacher now gives an illustration.

He has already taught that wisdom is better than folly.

Now he shows wisdom accomplishing what strength could not.

Cross References

1 Kings 4:30

Solomon’s wisdom became greater than the wisdom of the people of the East and greater than the wisdom of Egypt.

Proverbs 24:5

A wise person possesses real strength, and a person with knowledge continually increases his ability.

James 3:17

The wisdom that comes from above is pure, peace-loving, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial, and sincere.

Spiritual Principle

True wisdom often proves its value most clearly in a crisis.

XIV. A GREAT KING ATTACKS A SMALL CITY

Ecclesiastes 9:14 — Strength Against Weakness

“There was a small city with few men in it, and a great king came against it, surrounded it, and built great siegeworks against it.”

The situation appears hopeless.

A small city.

Few defenders.

A powerful king.

A great army.

Siegeworks.

By ordinary human standards, the outcome appears obvious.

Cross References

2 Samuel 20:15

Joab's forces came and surrounded the city of Abel Beth Maacah. They built a siege ramp against the city wall and began battering the wall to bring it down.

Judges 7:2

The Lord told Gideon, "You have too many soldiers for Me to give Midian into your hands, because Israel might boast and say that their own strength saved them."

1 Samuel 17:47

David declared that everyone would know the Lord does not save merely by sword or spear, because the battle belongs to the Lord and He determines the outcome.

Spiritual Principle

Circumstances that appear impossible can still be changed through wisdom and God's providence.

XV. A POOR WISE MAN SAVES THE CITY

Ecclesiastes 9:15 — Wisdom Without Recognition

"In it was found a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom saved the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man."

This is a remarkable picture.

The man is:

Poor.

Unimportant by social standards.

Yet wise.

His wisdom saves an entire city.

Then:

He is forgotten.

Human recognition does not always match true contribution.

Cross References

2 Samuel 20:22

The wise woman spoke to all the people, and they followed her counsel. They ended the rebellion, and Joab withdrew his army from the city.

Ecclesiastes 9:16

Then I concluded that wisdom is better than strength, even though the wisdom of a poor person is often despised and his words may be ignored.

Matthew 13:57

The people took offense at Jesus, but He said, “A prophet is usually honored except among his own people and in his own home.”

Spiritual Principle

The value of your contribution is not determined by how long people remember your name.

Application

Be faithful even when recognition never comes.

XVI. WISDOM IS BETTER THAN STRENGTH

Ecclesiastes 9:16 — The Poor Man’s Wisdom

“Then I said: Wisdom is better than strength, but the wisdom of the poor is despised, and his words are not heard.”

The poor man proved:

Wisdom can accomplish what military power cannot.

Yet society often judges ideas by the status of the speaker.

That is foolish.

Truth does not become less true because it comes from someone poor.

Cross References

Ecclesiastes 9:15

A poor but wise man lived in the city, and through his wisdom he delivered the city, even though afterward no one remembered him.

1 Corinthians 1:27

God chose what the world considers foolish to shame those who think themselves wise, and He chose what the world considers weak to expose the limitations of the strong.

James 2:5

Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: has God not chosen many who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom He promised to those who love Him?

Spiritual Principle

Never dismiss wisdom because of the social position of the person speaking.

XVII. QUIET WISDOM IS BETTER THAN LOUD FOOLISHNESS

Ecclesiastes 9:17 — Quiet Words Matter

“The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools.”

Volume is not authority.

Loudness is not wisdom.

The loudest voice in the room is not necessarily the wisest.

Wisdom often speaks calmly.

Foolishness often shouts.

Cross References

Proverbs 15:1

A gentle answer can turn away anger, but harsh words stir up greater conflict.

Ecclesiastes 10:12

The words spoken by a wise person bring favor and grace, but the lips of a fool eventually destroy him.

1 Kings 19:12

After the earthquake and fire came a gentle, quiet sound, and there Elijah recognized the presence and voice of the Lord.

Spiritual Principle

Truth does not need to shout in order to be true.

XVIII. WISDOM BUILDS, BUT ONE SINNER CAN DESTROY MUCH

Ecclesiastes 9:18 — One Person Can Undo Great Good

“Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.”

The chapter ends with contrast.

Wisdom can save a city.

Sin can destroy much good.

One person’s sinful action can affect:

A family.

A church.

A community.

A nation.

A ministry.

Cross References

Proverbs 21:22

A wise person can overcome a city defended by strong warriors and bring down the defenses in which they trusted.

Joshua 7:1

Israel acted unfaithfully concerning what God had commanded to be set apart, because Achan took what was forbidden, and his sin brought consequences upon the larger community.

1 Corinthians 5:6

Your boasting is not good. Do you not understand that a small amount of yeast spreads through the entire batch of dough?

Spiritual Principle

Wisdom can build slowly.

Sin can destroy quickly.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Never underestimate either the constructive power of wisdom or the destructive reach of one sinful choice.

XIX. SEVEN GREAT LESSONS FROM ECCLESIASTES 9

1. Life Is in God's Hand

The righteous.

The wise.

Their deeds.

All remain under God's knowledge and authority.

Principle:

An unseen future is still held by a known God.

2. Death Is Certain

Every person faces earthly mortality.

Principle:

The certainty of death should create urgency about how we live.

3. Hope Belongs to the Living

While life remains, opportunity remains.

Principle:

As long as God gives breath, use the opportunity He gives.

4. Enjoy God's Present Gifts

Food.

Marriage.

Work.

Daily provision.

These should be received gratefully.

Principle:

Do not allow fear of death to prevent you from enjoying the life God has given.

5. Work Diligently

Whatever your hand finds to do:

Do it wholeheartedly.

Principle:

Opportunity has an expiration date.

6. Ability Does Not Guarantee Success

Speed.

Strength.

Wisdom.

Skill.

Do not completely control outcomes.

Principle:

Prepare faithfully, but trust God with results.

7. Wisdom Is Better Than Power

A poor wise man saved a city.

Principle:

One wise voice can accomplish more than great outward strength.

XX. WHAT ECCLESIASTES 9 TEACHES ABOUT DEATH

Death appears repeatedly throughout this chapter.

The Preacher is not trying to create despair.

He is creating urgency.

Because death comes:

Use life wisely.

Love people now.

Serve now.

Work now.

Reconcile now.

Give thanks now.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The certainty of death should make us more serious about living, not less interested in life.

XXI. WHAT ECCLESIASTES 9 TEACHES ABOUT HOPE

Verse 4 says:

“Anyone who is among the living has hope.”

While there is life, there is opportunity.

A person can:

Repent.

Turn to God.

Ask forgiveness.

Repair relationships.

Change direction.

Serve faithfully.

Spiritual Principle

Never treat another day as worthless.

It is another opportunity.

XXII. WHAT ECCLESIASTES 9 TEACHES ABOUT ENJOYMENT

The Preacher repeatedly commands the reader to enjoy God’s gifts.

Enjoy:

Bread.

Drink.

Marriage.

Work.

This enjoyment is not sinful indulgence.

It is gratitude.

Key Truth

A brief life should not become a joyless life.

XXIII. WHAT ECCLESIASTES 9 TEACHES ABOUT MARRIAGE

The chapter specifically says:

“Enjoy life with the wife whom you love.”

Marriage should not become merely:

Bills.

Schedules.

Responsibilities.

Work.

Marriage is also companionship.

Joy.

Shared life.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Do not give everyone else your best energy and leave only exhaustion for the person you promised to love.

XXIV. WHAT ECCLESIASTES 9 TEACHES ABOUT WORK

Work should be done:

Fully.

Diligently.

Faithfully.

Why?

Because opportunities do not last forever.

Spiritual Principle

Do not give halfhearted effort to responsibilities God has placed in your hands.

XXV. WHAT ECCLESIASTES 9 TEACHES ABOUT SUCCESS

The chapter destroys the assumption:

“The best person always wins.”

Not necessarily.

Life contains:

Unexpected circumstances.

Human decisions.

Changing conditions.

Events beyond our control.

Key Truth

Faithfulness is our responsibility.

Results ultimately remain beyond complete human control.

XXVI. WHAT ECCLESIASTES 9 TEACHES ABOUT WISDOM

Wisdom can save an entire city.

Yet wisdom may still be:

Ignored.

Despised.

Forgotten.

That does not decrease its value.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Truth is not measured by applause.

Wisdom is not measured by popularity.

XXVII. WHAT ECCLESIASTES 9 TEACHES ABOUT RECOGNITION

The poor wise man saved the city.

Then everyone forgot him.

This is a powerful warning against living for recognition.

If the value of your service depends upon people remembering your name, you will eventually be disappointed.

Spiritual Principle

God sees faithful work even when people forget who performed it.

XXVIII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

What does verse 1 teach about God's sovereignty?

It teaches that the righteous, the wise, and their deeds are in God's hand.

Even when the future is unclear, God remains in control.

Question 2

What is the "same fate" described in verse 2?

It refers to physical death.

Both righteous and wicked people eventually die.

Question 3

Does this mean righteous and wicked people have the same eternal destiny?

No.

The chapter is discussing their common earthly mortality, not saying their final judgment before God is identical.

Question 4

Why is a living dog better than a dead lion?

Because life still provides opportunity.

The lowliest living person still has opportunities that a dead earthly hero no longer possesses.

Question 5

What does verse 5 mean when it says the dead “know nothing”?

It is describing their lack of participation in earthly affairs under the sun.

Their earthly work and earthly opportunities have ended.

Question 6

Why does the Preacher encourage enjoyment?

Because life is brief, and ordinary blessings should be received gratefully rather than ignored.

Question 7

What does verse 9 teach about marriage?

Marriage should include enjoyment, affection, companionship, and gratitude for the spouse God has given.

Question 8

What does verse 10 teach about work?

We should perform present responsibilities wholeheartedly because earthly opportunities are limited.

Question 9

What does “time and chance” mean?

It describes unexpected events and changing circumstances from the human perspective that affect earthly outcomes.

It does not deny God's sovereignty.

Question 10

Why is the poor wise man important?

His wisdom saved an entire city, showing that wisdom can be more powerful than military strength.

Question 11

Why was the poor wise man forgotten?

The Preacher is showing how unreliable human recognition can be.

People often benefit from wisdom without remembering the person who provided it.

Question 12

What does the final verse teach?

Wisdom is stronger than weapons, but one sinful person or decision can destroy a great amount of good.

XXIX. PERSONAL APPLICATION

Ecclesiastes 9 asks several searching questions.

Do I Trust That My Life Is in God's Hand?

Or am I consumed by fear over what I cannot see?

Am I Living with the Certainty of Death in Mind?

Does mortality affect my priorities?

Am I Using the Opportunities I Have Today?

What have I been postponing?

Am I Enjoying God's Gifts?

Or am I so worried about tomorrow that I cannot enjoy today?

Am I Investing in My Marriage?

Do I intentionally enjoy life with the person I love?

Am I Doing My Work Wholeheartedly?

Or am I giving God and others careless effort?

Do I Assume Ability Guarantees Results?

Can I work faithfully while trusting God with outcomes?

Do I Need Recognition?

Would I still serve faithfully if nobody remembered my contribution?

Am I Listening for Quiet Wisdom?

Or am I impressed only by loud voices and powerful people?

XXX. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Do Today’s Work While Today’s Opportunity Remains”

One day:

The opportunity will be gone.

The phone call can no longer be made.

The apology can no longer be offered.

The sermon can no longer be preached.

The person can no longer be encouraged.

The work can no longer be completed.

Ecclesiastes says:

“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your strength.”

Principle:

Do not live carelessly with opportunities that have an expiration date.

XXXI. THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUCCESS AND FAITHFULNESS

The race is not always won by the fastest runner.

The strongest army does not always win.

The most intelligent person does not always become wealthy.

The most skilled person does not always become famous.

Therefore:

Do not make success your god.

Faithfulness belongs to you.

Final results belong to God.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

You are responsible for obedience.

You are not responsible for controlling every outcome.

XXXII. THE FORGOTTEN WISE MAN

The poor wise man saved the city.

Imagine that.

An entire population benefited from his wisdom.

Yet afterward:

Nobody remembered him.

Human beings often remember:

Kings.

Generals.

Celebrities.

Powerful people.

But forget:

Teachers.

Counselors.

Prayer warriors.

Faithful servants.

Quiet people whose wisdom changed everything.

Spiritual Principle

Being forgotten by people does not mean your work was meaningless.

XXXIII. QUIET WISDOM IN A LOUD WORLD

The Preacher says:

“The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools.”

The world often rewards:

Volume.

Confidence.

Visibility.

Performance.

But wisdom may arrive quietly.

Do not confuse:

Loudness with truth.

Popularity with wisdom.

Power with righteousness.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Some of the wisest voices in your life may also be the quietest.

Learn to listen.

XXXIV. ONE SINNER CAN DESTROY MUCH GOOD

The final warning is serious.

One sinful decision can damage:

Years of trust.

A family.

A testimony.

A ministry.

A church.

A business.

A friendship.

A community.

Joshua 7 demonstrates that one person's hidden disobedience created consequences for many others.

Spiritual Principle

Sin always promises less damage than it eventually causes.

XXXV. FINAL APPLICATION

Ecclesiastes Chapter 9 brings us face to face with death.

But its message is not:

“Give up.”

Its message is:

Live faithfully while you can.

Your life is in God's hand.

You cannot see every event ahead.

But God can.

Death is certain.

Therefore:

Do not waste life.

Eat your bread with joy.

Receive daily provision with gratitude.

Enjoy your relationships.

Invest in your marriage.

Do your work wholeheartedly.

Do not continually postpone life until some imaginary perfect future arrives.

Today matters.

Your opportunities today matter.

The people around you today matter.

The work before you today matters.

And when success does not come exactly as expected:

Do not assume your faithfulness was wasted.

The fastest person does not always win.

The strongest does not always triumph.

The wisest does not always become wealthy.

The skilled are not always recognized.

But faithfulness remains valuable.

The poor wise man saved the city.

Then people forgot him.

Perhaps that is one of this chapter's greatest lessons.

You do not need everyone to remember you.

You need to be faithful.

People may forget your name.

God does not forget faithfulness.

People may overlook your contribution.

God sees.

People may praise louder voices.

Keep speaking wisdom.

People may reward power.

Choose righteousness.

And remember the final warning:

One sinner can destroy much good.

Therefore:

Guard your life.

Guard your testimony.

Guard your decisions.

Choose wisdom.

Reject sin.

Live diligently.

Love deeply.

Enjoy gratefully.

Work wholeheartedly.

Serve faithfully.

And use the life God has placed in your hands while you still have it.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You that our lives are in Your hands.

The future may be hidden from us, but nothing is hidden from You.

Teach us to trust You when we cannot see what is coming.

Remind us that our earthly lives are brief.

Help us live with eternity in view.

Do not allow the certainty of death to make us hopeless.

Let it make us wise.

Thank You for every day of life You give us.

Help us use each day faithfully.

When we have opportunities to:

Serve.

Love.

Forgive.

Encourage.

Teach.

Work.

Pray.

Witness.

Help us not to postpone them carelessly.

Father, teach us to enjoy Your gifts.

Thank You for daily bread.

Thank You for work.

Thank You for relationships.

Thank You for marriage.

Thank You for moments of joy.

Keep us from being so worried about tomorrow that we fail to receive today.

Help husbands and wives enjoy the lives You have given them together.

Protect marriages from neglect.

Help us value people more than endless work.

Father, teach us to work with all our strength.

Whatever You place before us, help us do it faithfully.

Keep us from laziness.

Keep us from halfhearted service.

Give us diligence while opportunity remains.

When our plans do not produce the results we expected, remind us that outcomes are not fully in our control.

Help us prepare wisely.

Work faithfully.

And trust You with the results.

Give us wisdom greater than strength.

Help us listen for quiet wisdom.

Do not let us be deceived by loud voices simply because they are loud.

Teach us to recognize truth.

Father, protect us from the desire for recognition.

If people remember us, keep us humble.

If people forget us, keep us faithful.

Remind us that You see every act of obedience.

Protect us from sin.

Do not allow one foolish decision to destroy years of good.

Give us wisdom before temptation becomes action.

Give us courage to walk away from sin.

May our lives build rather than destroy.

May our words help rather than harm.

May our work serve Your purposes.

May our relationships reflect Your love.

And when our earthly opportunities finally end, may we have used them faithfully for Your glory.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Key Verse

“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your strength, for in the grave, where you are going, there is no work or planning, no knowledge or wisdom.” — Ecclesiastes 9:10

Central Truth

Because earthly life is brief and death is certain, we should trust ourselves to God's hand, enjoy His present gifts, work diligently while opportunity remains, value wisdom above outward power, and remain faithful even when human recognition never comes.

Ecclesiastes 9 in One Sentence

The Preacher teaches that death is the common earthly destiny of all, yet life remains a precious opportunity to enjoy God's gifts, love faithfully, work diligently, trust Him with uncertain outcomes, and choose the quiet power of wisdom over strength, status, and sin.