

Chapter summary – Chapter nine is a continuation of chapters seven and eight.

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IV. In Solomon’s search for an answer to his question, he now tells us how to live for that which exists above the sun, (Ch. 7:1-12:7)

1. SOLOMON DESCRIBES FOR US THE BEST WAY TO BENEFIT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE FROM OUR LIFE UNDER THE SUN, (7:1-12:7)

1) Solomon details the real value of wisdom that is from God, (7:1-9:18)

(7) God’s wisdom enables us to recognize and experience a more abundant life, (9:1-18)

When you strive on a habitual basis to love God and faithfully serve Him, and then experience an all but fatal crisis like loosing a son.....you ask yourself a lot of questions about yourself, life and God—very much like Job, did. Many of the questions you ask, you know you will never find answers for.....at least this side of heaven. All during this process a part of you dies. At the same time (if you are dealing with your loss biblically—not grieving as those who have no hope), a part of you grows to phenomenal heights because of the phenomenal loss. Another part of you even so, becomes disenchanted. A part of you is severely tempted to become downright cynical. There are other aspects one faces in sever crisis’, but no matter what you face.....all of these facets of your experience, that you go through, are like the wind. They are like the wind in that they constantly change direction and intensity without notice.

You know you are in way over your head, and you often feel that you don’t know what to do. But, you know deep down inside, that the direction that the wind blows and the intensity with which it blows, will be determined for the most part, by the choices you make about what you believe after asking those questions about yourself, life and God.

1a The reality that a more abundant life exists, (1)

 INTERPRETATION:

¹ **For I considered all this in my heart** (again I reflected deeply upon man’s ignorance in being able to understand how and why events transpire as they do in this broken world—desiring to see beyond the seeming vanity/futility of it all, life under the sun; how it is like chasing after the wind), **so that I could declare it all** (the good and the bad—so that I could thoroughly and accurately explain life. Is that something you would like to know? Are you bothered by some of the things that happen to you? Have you ever asked the question, “Why God?” Well, what Solomon has uncov-

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ered to enlighten us with, for all of his time, energy and resources, in its most concise

form is—drum roll please!), **that the righteous and the wise and their works** (hold on to your seats), **are in the hand of God**, (What!? That’s it? God alone is in absolute control and what happens in our lives, He uses for His benefit, which will ultimately result in benefiting believers as well. Because of this broken world) **People know neither love nor hatred** (or we could say, prosperity nor adversity), **by anything they see before them**, (they don’t know if prosperity or adversity awaits them down the road of life. It can’t be predicted—it is ultimately determined not by your circumstances, nor by our faith, or our faithfulness, but by God. He always has the final word).¹

F **APPLICATION:**

What is Solomon trying to say to us here? Is this supposed to inspire us!? Is this something about God that is instrumental to our faith, our abundant life? Yes.

1. The fact that a more abundant life is a reality and is available to you, is derived by what you know, not by what you see. For example:
 - No matter what transpires in your life (whether prosperity or adversity), it is all under the watch care of God. Sometimes God Himself directly brings things about in our lives, [e.g., Jeremiah /appointed a prophet {*your talents, gender, family*}]. Whatever your opinion is of these on these matters is, God, Himself, has determined them. Other times God works through the natural consequences of our wrong choices to do His work, [e.g., Samson’s rebellion/Philistine temple—“Give me my strength one more time.” {*God will use all things for good...Rom. 8:28*}]. At times God works through others [Pharisees/Jesus—“Crucify Him!” {*your friends as well as your enemies*}], or the devil/demons [Job/devil { *he tries to get you to dump God, walk away from your faith, believe that God can’t use you* }], or your experiences, [Disciples/storm on the sea {*we need to walk by faith and not by sight.*}]

In any of these scenarios,

 **COMMENTARY:**

¹ Consider the work of God; for who can make straight what He has made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: surely God has appointed the one as well as the other, so that man can find out nothing that will come after him. I have seen everything in my days of vanity: there is a just man who perishes in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man who prolongs life in his wickedness. (Ec 7:13-15)

*God is under no
obligation to tell
us
what He is doing
or why He is do-
ing it.*

- No matter what transpires in your life (whether prosperity or adversity), it all somehow fits into God’s ultimate plan for you and the physical and spirit world around you, [*no matter what*]

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you think, life is really never out of God's control nor is it ever meaningless. Ever!]

- No matter what transpires in your life (whether prosperity or adversity), in this broken world, God will reward believers, only good and all the good you deserve, when you enter His perfect kingdom. It won't happen on earth, but it will happen in heaven. It's workman's comp. at its best!
2. Another way to look at this is, don't judge a person's spiritual condition by his or her outward circumstances. The reason being, prosperity doesn't always follow those who love God, and affliction doesn't always follow those who God is displeased with. No man knows why who receives what. God's wisdom and will is beyond our understanding in these matters. So don't even try to play God.

One of the comments that Charles Swindoll makes concerning this verse is, "Being in the hand of God is not synonymous with or a guarantee for being economically prosperous, physically healthy, protected from pain, enjoying a trouble-free occupation, and having everyone smile and appreciate us."²

² Swindoll, *Living on the Ragged Edge*, p. 257.

There comes a time when you can even laugh at "most" of your calamities, because you have grown through and beyond them. But, it still takes time.

When you strive on a habitual basis to love God and faithfully serve Him, and then experience an all but fatal crisis (like losing a child), you ask yourself a lot of questions. Questions about yourself, life and God; very much like Job did. Many of the questions you ask, you know you will never find answers for, at least not this side of heaven. All during this process though, a part of you dies. At the same time (if you are dealing with your loss biblically, not grieving as those who have no hope, a part of you grows to phenomenal heights because of the phenomenal loss. Another part of you, even so, becomes disenchanted. A part of you is severely tempted to become downright cynical. There are other aspects one faces in severe crisis, but no matter what you face, all of these facets of your experience, that you go through, are like the wind. They are like the wind in that they constantly change direction and intensity without notice. One minute you are fighting depression and the next you are filled with hope. One moment you are crying and the next you are laughing. One moment you are sad and the next you are joyful.

You know you are in way over your head. You often feel that you don't know what to do, or that what you are doing isn't working. But, you know deep down inside, that the direction that the wind blows

and the intensity with which it blows, will be determined to some degree, by the choices you make

about what you believe after asking those questions about yourself, life and God.

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Have you ever asked yourself during one of these times, “Where is God in all of this!?” Well, during these times, what we know and believe about God is absolutely critical. God is actually right in the midst of our crisis, reaching out to us with a more abundant life. We see death in our crisis and God sees life.

- You need to change your theology if it is faulty. You need to know what God promises and what He does not. Get your expectations in check.
- You need to see pain, as necessary, even good, if you are ever going to experience the tenderness of our Shepherd and Savior beyond your forgiveness for sin. The severer the pain, the greater His compassion, grace and mercy. I am only becoming to understand what Christ meant when He said, “Blessed are they that mourn.”
- You need to not only tell God that you want Him do in and through you whatever He wants, but you need to accept what He does when He does it.
- You must expect at times (and usually in the most severest of times), that you will have to blindly accept what you could never possibly hope to understand. The only alternative is anger, resentment, depression, apathy, suicide, and so on.
- You must remember that a purer, more focused, more intense, more abundant life lies before you in all of life’s circumstances, but especially, in the most sever of circumstances. It’s there but you must reach out and take hold of it.
- You must bear in mind that if you are knowingly and will-

ingly living in sin, brining adversity into the life s those around you. God will only tolerate it in His grace and mercy so long.

2a The urgency of capitalizing on this abundant life, (2-6)

In one of the classics written midway through the nineteenth century—Herman Melville’s famous book *Moby Dick*—it is encouraging to read the following words regarding the book of Ecclesiastes:

The mortal man who hath more of joy than sorrow in him cannot be true [cannot be real]. And the same with books. The truest of all men was the man of sorrows; and the truest of all books, Ecclesiastes, the fine hammered steel of woe.

[That is so perceptive! It’s not meant to be depressive, just real, authentic, genuine, saying it like it is, about life.]

When we give attention to Solomon's journal, we are reading the "fine-hammered steel" of a man telling us the truth [about life], not the least of which is the absolute certainty of death.³

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Someone has said that, “As long as you laugh at your troubles, you may be sure you will never run out of something to laugh at.”

² **All things** (love and hate [v. 1]; prosperity and adversity), **come alike to all** (nobody knows from one day to the next how things will go in this broken world—God alone understands and oversees these matters):⁴ **one event happens to the righteous and** (the same happens to), **the wicked; to the good, the clean, and the unclean; to him who sacrifices and him who**

⁴ No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. 1 Co 10:13

³ Swindoll, *Living on the Ragged Edge*, p. 258, 259

does not sacrifice, (being born again or still dead in your sin—living a life of godliness or ungodliness makes no difference in respect to enjoying prosperity and suffering adversity; to some degree). **As is the good** (the forgiven child of God), **so is the sinner** (in this case); **he who takes an oath as he who fears** (making), **an oath**, (to God).

³ **This is an evil** (it's a terrible misery, a heavy weight, a tremendous burden), **in all that is done under the sun** (that all of us suffer from on this earth): **that one thing happens to all. Truly** (the result of this is that rather than humble oneself and repent, seeing how we have messed up this world by bringing sin into it), **the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness** (insanity), **is in their hearts while they live** (fighting, arguing, living in fear, stealing, lying, going on spending sprees, drinking, doing drugs, committing fornication or adultery, being involved in risky behavior; giving themselves to all sorts of selfish and senseless pleasure; it's madness, insanity), **and after that they go to the dead**, (Sheol, to judgment or paradise [Luke 16:19-31]—death seals one's destiny forever).⁵

F APPLICATION:

We've heard about the doctrine of depravity all our lives, but not much about the doctrine of insanity, right? ...Lurking in the human heart is a permanent mixture of evil and insanity. It's enough to make shivers run up one's spine...What an awful mixture-meanness and madness!

Think about our day. How else can we explain the moral insanity? The sexual insanity? The homicidal insanity? The rationalization—the *insane* rationalization? The materialistic madness? The intellectual madness? The judicial madness of our times? It's absolutely insane!

...You see, within the human heart there is a private polluted pool, a reservoir of insanity. You can drink from it. You can swim in it. You can be polluted by it. It's your own private pool and everybody

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has one. Like the prodigal who ran wild, acted out his insanity, and finally came to his senses before he went back home. Remember the story in Luke 15? Don't miss the part that says, "He came to himself." In other words, he returned to sanity.

How else can we explain the rebellion of our age? How else can we explain the response of a person who stares back [at a parent, a

⁵ It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, Heb 9:27

spouse, or stares], over the counselor's desk and says to the professional, "Look, I know it's wrong, but forget about convincing me—I'm going for it." What better explanation can we give than this one Solomon offers: "The hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and insanity is in their hearts through their lives."⁶

Does that not make sense to you?!

- We are no different from the Israelites who wandered throughout the desert for 40 years whining and complaining all the way.
- We are no different than the Jews when they cried out against Jesus saying, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

The human race as a whole is a stiff-necked, hard hearted, rebellious people.

⁴ **But** (even though you know that there is going to be adversity mingled in your prosperity no matter how you live) **for him who is joined to all the living** (that is still alive on earth), **there is hope** (to be saved, to glorify God, to better yourself personally, to love your neighbor, to make your mark upon the world, to live above adversity, to right some wrongs, to really appreciate times of prosperity), **for a living dog** (representing to the Jew then, something that was dirty, diseased and vile), **is better than a** (noble but), **dead lion**.

⁵ **For** (the reason being is that), **the living know that they will die**⁷ (but where there is life, there is hope);⁸ **but the dead know nothing** (death terminates everything in this life, the good as well as the bad—It's like throwing the baby out with the bathwater! That is suicide, and suicide is not the route to take! Hope is the route to take, for where there is life, there is hope. [When I identified our sons body at the hospital, I was utterly without hope of ever of having any loving interaction again with him this side of glory. All of the hopes and desires I had for him and us were over, gone; all in a single instant.]), **and they have no more reward** (no more advantageous opportunities: they can't build further upon their strengths, correct their wrongs, enrich the world in which they live,

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⁶ Swindoll, *Living on the Ragged Edge*, pp. 259-260.

⁷ In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return." Ge 3:19

⁸ That motto goes as far back as the third century B.C. It's part of a conversation between two farmers who are featured in a poem by the Greek poet Theokritos. "Console yourself, dear Battos," says Korydon. "Things may be better tomorrow. While there's life there's hope. Only the dead have none." (Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Satisfied*, Ec 9:1. Logos)

or find even greater satisfaction in life), **for the memory of them is forgotten**. (Their interaction with and impact upon this world is over, silenced. The living can at least respond to their adversity with the hope

that it will not only end and better days will come, but that by facing the adversity it will somehow benefit their lives, the lives of those around them and glorify God; that it will forge out of their life some “fine hammered steel.” The dead have nothing, at least the living have this.)⁹

⁶ **Also** (in addition to this) **their love** (i.e., *prosperity*—the good things they enjoyed), **their hatred** (*adversity*—the terrible things that they despised), **and their envy** (the things that they did not possess but desired [not necessarily bad things]), **have now perished**, (forever); **nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun**, (that is, in this earthly life).

God is telling us through Solomon, that because of the fundamental condition of depravity that the entire human race suffers from, because we live in a broken sin cursed world, and because adversity and death are thus inevitable, we must see the urgency to seize every possible opportunity to live life to the fullest and serve God today, while we can. We must do this in time of prosperity as well as in times of adversity. While we live, there is hope for a brighter future, and better resurrection. A few matters along these lines that we would do well to remember are:

- ☺ Although the circumstances may be the same for the saved and unsaved, ***the outcomes will not be***. Heavenly home and rewards
- ☺ Although the circumstances may be the same for the saved and unsaved, ***the means to weather them are not***. Holy Spirit (Comforter, Encourager, Authoritarian, Guide, Protector, Prayer Warrior); promises (hope); one another (company, accountability); Word, (direction); unbelievers (model God’s grace and power before them)
- ☺ Although the circumstances may be the same for the saved and unsaved, ***the perspective will not be***. God is control, He has a reason for the prosperity or adversity, and thus this is necessary and even best as God can only be perfect therefore His will and work are perfect too

Because our world is sin cursed, adversity and eventual death is certain. Because our Creator intervenes in our lives in this sin cursed

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⁹ Why are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise Him, the help of my countenance and my God. (Ps 42:11)

I will lift up my eyes to the hills— From whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth. He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord is your keeper; the Lord is your shade at your right hand. The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. The Lord shall preserve you from all evil; He shall preserve your soul. The Lord shall preserve your going out and your coming in from this time forth, and even forevermore. Ps 121

Our Lord brings hope and He increases our reward.

world, a perfect blend of prosperity with adversity is measured out to us. This is in order for us to

maximize our potential in the present conditions of this world. We must become as “fine hammered steel.”

Sin has hardened our hearts and like a black smith, it takes the blows of the heavy hammer of adversity sometimes to even put a dent in it. Our hearts are naturally soft and pliable anymore.

3a The multiple facets of this abundant life, (7-18)

1b God commands us to enjoy the simple things, which is where the abundant life is found, (7-9)

⁷ **Go** (now God commands us, understanding that prosperity and adversity are going to be an inseparable part of our life, but remembering that God is in control of it), **eat your bread with joy** (not until you are full of joy), **and drink your wine with a merry heart** (not until you become merry. —The opposite of this command would be to set around and brood, whine, complain, making life miserable for yourself and everyone around you. God is telling us to live it up! not roll over and die. Death is a short ways ahead of us, and adversity is a part of us, but God provides many good, refreshing and enjoyable gifts all along the way, everyday! It’s really a matter of choice, not provision. We need to count our blessings and name them one by one, everyday! We need to enjoy the simple things in life.)¹⁰; **for God has already accepted your works** (*if* you are reconciled to Him through Christ and living for Him—you really don’t have anything to worry about, no matter what you are going through; in life or death. God rejoices when He sees you enjoying life and especially when you are facing adversity).

F APPLICATION:

I don’t think that is the image that many in the world have of God. Rather than seeing God as ready and willing to listen and talk to them, and/or forgive, accept and love them, they see God as harsh, distant, confusing, hard to get to know, a kill joy, and too busy or good for them. Yet, while Jesus Christ walked upon this earth He not only told us the truth about what God the Father was like, but Christ also perfectly modeled Him, being God the Son. ***God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.*** (Jn 3:17) Jesus says just a little bit before His death, ***“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!”*** (Mt 23:37) The real problem is with the human race, not with God.

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¹⁰ He causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the service of man, that he may bring forth food from the earth, and wine that makes glad the heart of man, oil to make his face shine, and bread which strengthens man’s heart. Ps 104:14-15

Christ had time for the youngest to the oldest. He healed everyone unconditionally. Anyone who wanted to listen to His teaching could. Anyone looking for the truth could find it. Christ fed the multitudes requiring nothing in return. He was ready and willing to listen and talk to them, to forgive, accept and love them. Christ was kind and gentle, approachable, truthful, showing and offering joy, and never too busy or good for them. Christ also said to one of His disciples, ***“Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.”*** (Jn 14:9-10) Christ showed us the Father!

We all have a view of who God is, but God and His Word determines if our view of Him is a true view or not. God is who He is, no matter what we think about Him.

- ⁸ **Let your garments always be white** (symbolizing purity—in glory our garments will be white because believers will be pure positionally and practically [Rev. 6:11; 7:9]—on earth believers are pure positionally in Christ, but in practice it is progressive so the inference here is, may we always walk the path of purity), **and let your head lack no oil**, (symbolizing blessing and the Holy Spirit, may those who profess saving faith in Christ, always experience the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in their life—may they be filled with Him, and not grieve or quench Him. This would be to live a life free of guilt and remorse as well).
- ⁹ **Live joyfully with the wife whom you love**¹¹ (enjoy each others company and love [the marriage bed is undefiled], have a blast together, make room for romance, laugh together), **all the days of your vain** (brief and challenging), **life which He has given** (provided, arranged for), **you** (as brief as it may be), **under the sun** (upon this earth), **all your days of vanity** (not just some of your days or even the majority of them, but enjoy *all* of them!); **for that is your** (determined), **portion in life and in the labor which you perform under the sun**. (Our portion of life is pre-measured by sin that we unleashed into this world and by God ruling over it. This is all we will have. Our portion doesn’t revolve around what we are going to achieve or acquire, but whether or not we are going to enjoy what we already have while we have it),

F APPLICATION:

Oswald Chambers comments on this verse saying, “These things—food, sex, money and [etc.], must always have their place in the life of any men of God, and they either make men and women devils [hedon-

¹¹ Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love. Pr 5:18-19

istic], or make them what they should be, [thankful and full of praise to God]. The man of God uses these things to express his relationship to God; whereas the man who does not know God tries to find his lasting good in the things themselves.”¹²

Matthew Henry comments, “Not that we must place our happiness in any of the delights of sense [sight, touch, smell, etc.], or set our hearts upon them, but what God has given us we must make as [pleasant and appropriate] a use of as we can afford, under the limitations of [balance] and wisdom, and not forgetting the poor.”¹³

These good things are a means to and end. They are not the end in and of themselves.

- They are a means through which we can express thanksgiving and praise to God for His multiple and daily gifts to us.
- They are a means through which festive and grateful joy can fill our hearts.
- They are a means to help us through this brief and challenging life; especially during hard times.
- They are a means through which God’s love and grace can be put on display before a people who are yet lost in their sin.
- They are a means through which we gain strength from, that enables us to have the strength to serve others.

2b God commands us to live this abundant life with intensity, (10)

Sally says to Charlie Brown, “We have to write a short piece for school that expresses our personal philosophy. So far I’ve written, ‘Who cares?’ and ‘Forget it.’” Charlie Brown says, “How about ‘Why me?’” “That’s good,” Sally replies. “I’ll fit that in.”

Does that ring any bells!? Did it push any buttons!? Did you sigh a silent, “Amen?”

I believe that if we have ears to hear, God is going to address this issue in our life as we study this passage.

¹⁰**Whatever your hand** (in life), **finds** (is able), **to do, do it** (*imperative*, “I command you,” God says, “to do it”), **with your might** (with all your strength and ability; the idea is to live with intensity now, today, everyday); **for there is no work** (on further achievements, opportunities), **or device** (to accomplish them), **or knowledge** (to plan them), **or wisdom** (to carry them out), **in the grave where you are going**, (in Sheol [OT term]—You are only going to go through life once so don’t waste it! Turn up the volume! Pull out the stops! Put the peddle to the metal! Let’s roll!).

¹²Chambers, Oswald. *Shade of His Hand : Talks on the Book of Ecclesiastes*. Hants UK: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1996, c1936. Logos Library

¹³Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible : Logos Library*

F APPLICATION:

This does not mean that there is no life after death, because there is. Nor does this mean that you are to live a hedonistic life here on earth, because you shouldn't. It does mean though, that God wants us to be excited about life and has intentionally provided ways for us to enjoy it to the fullest. More than anyone, God's children ought to be able to see this and capitalize on it. Our ability to have fun and enjoy life is part of our light that we are to let shine in this world! This is part of the salt we are to be! Christians ought to be showing people all around them, how to really live life to the hilt.

3b God warns us that the abundant life is not attained by our abilities, (11-18)

1c The Plain Facts, (11,12)

¹¹ **I returned and saw** (or, "again I observed"), **under the sun** (in this earthly life on our broken sin cursed world), **that—the race** (to success), **is not** (guaranteed) **to the swift**,¹⁴ **nor** (is), **the battle** (guaranteed), **to the strong**,¹⁵ **nor** (is), **bread** (guaranteed), **to the wise**,¹⁶ **nor** (is), **riches** (guaranteed), **to men of understanding**,¹⁷ **nor** (is), **favor** (guaranteed), **to men of skill**;¹⁸ **but time** (unpredictable seasons of life), **and chance** (unpredictable events in life), **happen to them all** (the idea is that unforeseen misfortune can and does befall everyone. God will not remove the natural consequences of this sin cursed world from anyone.)

We follow this same principle of natural consequences with our children. When they do something wrong, we tell them that they must suffer the consequences. Sometimes it is not our sin, but the circumstances we live in that produces less than desirable consequences in our life. For example, low funds restricting what we would like to do, or becoming ill, which also limits us. Maybe the car breaks down and we can't go where we want. But, there is some good news even amidst all the bad news. God promises that He is in control over all things and that He has a good purpose for allowing whatever He does into our life.¹⁹

¹⁴ They may stumble, be disqualified, get sick, pull a muscle, get tripped, or any other of other things.

¹⁵ Weather could cause his defeat, a wise enemy commander could minimize his military might, the hearts of his soldiers may turn against him, or a traitor could sell him out.

¹⁶ One could be laid off or asked to make a transfer he or she does not want to take, someone could lose everything in a fire, or a natural disaster like a tornado, hurricane, or earthquake.

¹⁷ Business ventures can go bad for the strangest reasons, attacks like the one on 9/11 can turn everything upside down, or you may find out your accountant has taken all your money. You could be the victim of a scam.

¹⁸ An illness could deplete your reserves. You could lose your integrity, your abilities could be stolen by an accident, or some young buck could show up with more skill than you ever even dreamed of having.

¹⁹ We must not forget and always bring into context that, "He (God), has made everything beautiful in its time. Also He has put eternity in their hearts, except that no one can find out the work that God does from beginning to end." Ecc 3:11

F APPLICATION:

You can get up at the crack of dawn, work late into the evening, set goals, meet goals, set new goals, become more competitive, all in the name of supposed success. You can rob your wife of important personal time and your kids as well; promising you will make it up to them later when you're further up the ladder towards success. You can tell God that you will make up the time that you have not spent with Him in devotions, prayer, worship and service later, as well. You can do it all thinking that you are going to climb that ladder of success, first. "First things first," you say. "I'm doing this for you," you tell them. You may just be successful too, but if you are, it will only be because it was meant to be, not because you wanted it to be. Fortune and misfortune happens to all, but God is in control of it.

Even though prosperity or adversity is all under the umbrella of God's sovereignty, it can still put you ahead or set you back. God is telling us that because of this we must always focus our time, energy, and resources on the best things; today and everyday!²⁰ Also, just as the devil could do nothing to Job, without God's permission, so too is everyone restricted by God's permissive will towards them, from doing things even for our selves. Is your life a model of God's truth, or the world's lie? **Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth.** (Pr 27:1)

God has the whole world in His hands. We know who holds the future and that should give you hope. It should allow you to enjoy life on a habitual basis.

¹²**For man also does not** (even), **know his time**, (the time of his death. The time when he will enter into eternity is the principle issue here, but we could also say that neither does a man know the times when he will experience seasons or events of prosperity or adversity either): **like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare** (in our case, very possibly even in the prime of life—or on the very threshold of a great deal—or just when you thought you were finally going to get that promotion, new toy, or great date—or just when you were about to make that last mortgage payment—or when you thought you had a lot of time to write that letter, send that card, restore that relationship, only to find that you couldn't. You were cut off from your opportunity), **so the sons of men are snared in an evil time** (a time that cannot be controlled or manipulated), **when it falls suddenly** (without warning), **upon them**, (one second they or someone close to them, are here and the next, they are utterly cut off from the relationships and

²⁰ But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me." And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her." Lk 10:40-42 (Can't you hear the pots and pans banging louder and louder!? Can't you see the looks that would kill a Tyrannosaurs Rex!? Can you read her lips!?)

opportunities that living on earth provided. At that time all will know for certain what would have mattered most in their life on earth—but there will be no opportunity to go back and do it over. They are cut off from those relationships and opportunities forever like the rich man in Luke 16:19ff).

2c The Painful Example, (13-18)

- ¹³ (Here's an example of), **This wisdom I have also seen under the sun, and it seemed great** (mind-boggling), **to me**: (absolutely unbelievable!)
- ¹⁴ **There was a little** (insignificant, unimportant, simple), **city with few men in it** (to populate or defend it); **and a great** (a powerful, renowned), **king came against it** (in all of his pride, power and skill and), **besieged it** (waged war against it—the giant against the ant, David against Goliath), **and built great snares around it**, (he surrounded it so no one could go in or out of the city, as he whittled away at their defenses).
- ¹⁵ **Now there was found** (during the war), **in it** (in the city), **a poor wise man** (a man who possessed little material wealth, but a great deal of human insight), **and he by his wisdom delivered the city**, (by foiling the great king).²¹ **Yet** (after he miraculously delivered the city from certain disaster), **no one** (not a single person!), **remembered that same poor man**, (he wasn't honored, **remembered that same poor man**, (he wasn't honored, rewarded or even remembered for his amazing service! He remained destitute and obscure. He secures prosperity for the city and is rewarded with more adversity for it. He is rewarded evil for his good. He would be a great recourse for Sally's philosophy paper. "Who cares!? Forget it!? Why me!? Life stinks!?)
- ¹⁶ **Then** (seeing this), **I said**: (on the one hand), **"Wisdom** (indeed), **is better** (more effective), **than strength**, (power and might, which is generally more impressive, is it not). **Nevertheless** (on the other hand), **the poor man's wisdom** (even though it was better), **is despised** (when he evidently shares his further wisdom after the war), **and his words are not heard**, (he is ignored, not promoted; probably by fools who wanted to remain in power. The moral of the story is, that even though wisdom is better than strength, it cannot guarantee success. You have to figure in the factor of this broken world).
- ¹⁷ **Words of the wise** (regardless of their social status though), **spoken quietly** (calmly, patiently, humbly), **should be heard** (should be heard), **rather than the** (loud, impatient, obnoxious), **shout of a ruler of fools**, (individuals whose only leadership virtue is volume and not substance).
- ¹⁸ **Wisdom is** (truly), **better than weapons of war; but one sinner** (one self-centered loud mouth, in this sin cursed world), **destroys much good**," (by either keeping good from happening altogether, or at the very least, by greatly diminishing wisdoms tremendous potential).

²¹ Wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten rulers of the city. Ecc 7:19

F APPLICATION:

The world shouts loudly, impatiently, even obnoxiously at times to all of us, young and old alike. The world says that this and that is an acceptable behavior to engage in, that this and that is an acceptable attitude to maintain, that this and that is an acceptable way to think—and to a great degree, destroys so much good that a godly spouse calmly, patiently, humbly communicates to his or her mate—or that a godly parent calmly, patiently, humbly communicates to his or her child—or that a godly friend calmly, patiently, humbly communicates to his or her friend—or that a godly counselor calmly, patiently, humbly communicates to his or her counselee.

God though His Word wisely communicates to us through these individuals such things as:

- ***Don't abort that baby***, (he or she is a human being, created in God's image. God has a plan for that child's life).
- ***Don't live a life of sexual immorality***, (homosexuality and lesbianism are not acceptable, living together is not acceptable, sex before marriage is not acceptable, sex outside of the marriage is not acceptable, pornography is not acceptable).
- ***Don't drink and drive or take those drugs***, (they will ruin your life and cause unbelievable pain to those who love you. They will cause you to do things that you cannot even believe you were even capable of doing).
- ***Don't get that divorce***, (God hates divorce, reconcile your marriage, work hard on it. Keep your vows).
- ***Don't take your life***, (God made you special, with God there is always hope, He can make all things beautiful to those who trust Him, in His time. God will never leave you alone).

On another note, "Since death is unavoidable and life is unpredictable, the only course we can safely take is to yield ourselves into the hands of God and walk by faith in His Word. In other words, "I purpose to accept what You allow into my life God, and I will look to You and Your Word to see how I am to handle it."

Why do some people tell a loved one that they have a curable illness rather than a terminal illness? Because they want to instill hope and encouragement. They want the individual to fight not give up. But, when they find out the truth they plummet. Why? because they were given a false hope. God's promises are not false hopes though. You simply need to know what He promises and what He does not.

We don't live by explanations; we live by promises. We don't depend on luck but on the providential working of our loving Father as we trust His promises and obey His will.

Because He is alive, and we live in Him, we don't look at life and say, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!"

Instead, we echo the confidence expressed by the Apostle Paul: “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord”(1 Cor. 15:57–58, NKJV).”²²

Abundant life is an issue of definition, yours verses God’s. If you agree with God’s definition, you are experiencing abundant life. If you do not agree with God’s definition, you are not experiencing abundant life, or at best you are experiencing it only sporadically. Probably only in times of prosperity.

Neither prosperity or adversity defines abundant life. It is defined by whether you trust God or not. Believing that everything that happens to you has meaning and value. This is the only way you will not miss out on seeing and enjoying the many special little gifts that God gives to you; everyday, throughout the day!

²² Wiersbe, Warren W. *Be Satisfied*, Ecc 9:11. Logos Software

 **INTERPRETATION:**

F **APPLICATION:**

 **COMMENTARY:**