

In the Hand of God
Harmony M.B.C., Oct. 28, 2012
Robert P. Myers

Ecc. 9:1 For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this, that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, *are* in the hand of God: no man knoweth either love or hatred *by* all *that is* before them.

Ecc. 9:2 All *things come* alike to all: *there is* one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as *is* the good, so *is* the sinner; *and* he that sweareth, as *he* that feareth an oath.

In chapter 8, Solomon had summarized what he had discovered about the things of life and death. Here in our text, he forms a conclusion about what he had considered. If we were to review **Chapter 8**, we would see that Solomon gave a lot of study to life and death, and concluded that people have no control over the time line for living or dying. He gave a lot of study to how people treated one another, and concluded that there were times when some people lorded it over other people only hurting themselves in the process (**v. 9**). Also, he noted that this kind of ruling over others (which he was writing about) was considered wickedness, and that after such men died all their works came to nothing. He also studied Providence generally, and noted that the outcome for people was often the same, regardless of whether they were good or evil...that is, you couldn't tell by what they went through in their lives whether they lived for the Lord or whether they lived for evil. As he considered this, he realized that sometimes men who were evil had Providence happen to them as though they were righteous, and that the righteous sometimes had Providence happen to them as though they were wicked (**v.14**). He also observed that in this way that things went, evil men were encouraged to do wickedly because they came to the conclusion that it didn't matter how a person lived, there was no punishment from God, nor any reward for being upright.

In his studies, Solomon also came to the conclusion that no matter how a man tried, he could not come to an understanding of how and why life turned out the way it did, nor could he discover true wisdom. So, these discoveries are what he is commenting about in our text which causes him to start by saying, "For all this I considered in my heart even to declare all this..." Or, in other words, he is saying that after not being able to understand it all, he was still able to conclude what he says in these verses. So, we want to examine his conclusions and ask God the Holy Spirit to give us understanding about it, because these truths are the foundation for keeping out spiritual perspective in an unspiritual and insane world.

I. The righteous, and the wise, and their works, *are* in the hand of God

- The fact of it: Helps us accept what we don't understand about how life goes
 - Helps us submit to the will of God in the matter of Providence
- The comfort of it: our affairs, lives, and deaths being in the hand of God can be an enormous comfort and encouragement to us when we realize how perfectly equipped God is to have guardianship of His people.
- First, we can't see the future, the obstacles before us, the hills, the valleys, the sunshine, the clouds, the troubles, the joys, but God is Omniscient
 - **Job 24:1** Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days?

- Peter said to Jesus Christ (**John 21:17**) “...Lord, thou knowest all things...”
- Second, We can’t always understand what is the right way, and can’t always understand what justice or fairness means, but God is perfectly righteous (that is God has zero confusion about what is upright, what is just, what is fair) Jeremiah came to grips with this, and he had the same questions we have sometimes; he came to God with those questions - **Jer. 12:1** Righteous *art* thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of *thy* judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? *wherefore* are all they happy that deal very treacherously?
 - When we truly get hold on the fact that God’s righteous decisions are NEVER colored by political, cultural, financial, or other man-made selfish agenda, but rather are always based on the pureness of His righteous nature, we can find fantastic comfort and hope in knowing we and our works are in His hands
 - Third, like Solomon, we cannot (in this life) come to understand absolute purity...that is, what it is to be without the slightest conflicting thought or deed; in other words, to be totally pure toward, and in the presence of, the Creator of the universe. But God is without a single conflicting element; that is, He is 100% holy, and so no conflicting thing prevents God from seeing things exactly as they are, and doing things exactly in agreement with total purity.
 - Again, Habakkuk considered this fact and like Jeremiah and Solomon, he also wrestled with what appeared to be a conflict between the holiness of God and Providence. In other words, the same things that puzzled Solomon confused the prophet; these same things confuse us. **Hab. 1:13** “*Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?*”
 - This is why Solomon’s conclusion from all his studies is so important to us, and why we should find hope and comfort in the fact that we and our works are in God’s hands. Because, who could know better how to guard and guide us than the One whose perceptions are without any blurring that results when purity is in any way marred by compromise.
- As humans, we can never have a perfect understanding of what it means to be utterly and unequivocally good. The scripture sadly, has to say of man that, “there is none good, no not one.” This means that at our very best, what we understand and think is really good is most probably cluttered with evil because of our flawed thinking.
- The ruler in Solomon’s thoughts in Chapter 8 who lords it over people very often imagines that it is for everyone’s good. But Solomon states that the ruler ends up hurting himself. I have a feeling that a lot of people who are in charge are snared by that, and reject God in their pursuit of power. Power has a way of corrupting in a way that brings destruction.
 - So, Solomon’s conclusion becomes even more precious to us when we think about God’s treatment of His people. Despite what things we must go through here on earth, we are bound to have comfort and hope when we think that this God who has us and our works in His hand is the same One who is always good to His people **Psalms 73:1** Truly God *is* good to Israel, *even* to such as are of a clean heart.
 - In all of the uncertainty around us and in us, as a result of our own ignorance and as a result of the rebellion against God in the world, it would seem like everything about existence happens much like the roll of dice. It may seem like both the affairs on this earth and the things of eternity are a gamble.
 - This kind of view is actually promoted by the discoveries that Solomon DID NOT

make when he went looking for them.

- In the midst of the ignorance and uncertainty, we can find extreme comfort and hope in knowing we are in God's hand when we think about his keeping power; that is His ability as the omnipotent God to keep that which is His.
- **John 10:29** My Father, which gave *them* me, is greater than all; and no *man* is able to pluck *them* out of my Father's hand.

II. Last phrase v.1 and v.2 - "...no man knoweth either love or hatred *by* all *that is* before them. All *things come alike* to all: *there is* one event to the righteous, and to the wicked; to the good and to the clean, and to the unclean; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as *is* the good, so *is* the sinner; *and* he that sweareth, as *he* that feareth an oath."

■ We cannot, and must not read the unfolding of Providence to be an indicator of our standing or our security. More than that, we are taught by God to not base our happiness on what our status or circumstances are at any one point in our lives.

➤ Remember the rule: we as His people are in His hand - **Psalms 31:15** "My times *are* in thy hand..."

➤ Rule 2: men are happy or miserable according as they are under the love or hatred of God, but not according as they are under the smiles or frowns of the world (thus, the meaning of that last phrase in **v.1**).

➤ Rule 3: There is very little difference between the conditions of the righteous and the wicked in this world: *There is one event* to both. Is David rich? So is Nabal. Is Joseph favoured by the ruler of the land? So is Haman. Is Ahab killed in a battle? So is Josiah. Are the bad figs carried to Babylon? So are the good (**Jer. 24**).

➤ Rule 4: The wise correctly interpret the things that happen to them in life. They seek to understand the ways of the Lord and attempt to turn every Providential event into a lesson for their instruction and good. And when they realize they cannot understand why things turn out the way they do, they also accept and believe as Solomon has said "...the righteous, and the wise, and their works, *are* in the hand of God..."