



PITWM VERSE BY VERSE

ECCLESIASTES 9:11-18

LESSON: WISDOM OVER STRENGTH—

October 4, 2026

INTRODUCTION:

The first half of this chapter Solomon talked about death, and knowing that man does not know his time of departure, he knows that all are in the hand of God. Here, he gives the people principles for living.

9:9 Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of the life of thy vanity, which he had given thee under the sun, all the days of thy vanity: for that is thy portion in this life, and in thy labour which thou takest under the sun. ¹Marriage is a divine gift meant to be enjoyed by one man and one woman together. God's first gift to Adam was Eve (Genesis 2:18, 24). Proverbs 18:22 says that *"He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord."* It would be very sad to be married and not appreciate and enjoy the great blessing God has given. Marriage pictures Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:32), therefore it honors the Lord who designed marriage as His covenant of love.

"Vanity" refers to the fleeting, temporary passing nature of human life; a "vapour" that passes away quickly. In practical terms, **all the days of the life of thy vanity** is a reminder to live each day with intention, to value the people and experiences that enrich your life, and to enjoy them while they last, knowing that time is short and life is fleeting that God has given you **under the sun** (earthly existence).

Do you see that the phrases are said twice to get our attention? God does not call His people to postpone faithful love and joyful obedience while waiting for ideal circumstances. In the portion of our life, there is work to be put forth. This is not a mere sensual enjoyment, but the state of being in the union and connection with God in the marriage. He is the *"Glue"* in the marriage through prayer, communication with Him, and obedience to the wisdom of His Word together. Solomon saw a wife as a gift from God (Prov. 18:22' 19; 14). It's too bad He didn't live up to his own wisdom. Colossians 3:19 says, *"Husbands, love [your] wives, and be not bitter against them."* This is a reminder of the urgency to live purposefully and joyfully, for this is our portion (reward; the outward happiness) in this life, and in our labor (work) in which we've labored under the sun.

9:10 Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest. Whatsoever you find your hand to do, do it with might— (strength) because the things that make up employment in this life will not be present in the grave, so make the most of your opportunities now. It is wonderful to be loved and wanted, but it is much more wonderful to be in the Will of God. Second, also to be needed. ²Every task placed before us—whether mundane chores, professional duties, or ministry opportunities—is a stewardship from God (Genesis 2:15; Ephesians 2:10). There is a feeling of accomplishment that comes from a job well done; doing it to the best of your ability, for

¹ <https://biblehub.com/ecclesiastes/9-9.htm>

² <https://biblehub.com/ecclesiastes/9-10.htm>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>





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in the grave where we're going, And the three responses to the fear of death says:

1. you needn't fear death because you can't escape it;
2. you needn't fear death because your endurance, your staying power, your continued existence gives you time to prepare and respond in a better way while you live; and thirdly,
3. you needn't fear death because your life can be an enjoyment to God, and not an empty life that does not please Him while you live.

There is no pursuit, or plans, or knowledge nor wisdom. What we do, we must do it well, for when night cometh no man can work. Do not allow yourself to get mired down in its vexatious of problems. If you fear God and walk by faith, you will not try to escape or merely endure life, but you will enjoy life and receive it happily as a gift from the Lord, knowing His best is always your best, even on the other side.

LESSON:

I. ECCLESIASTES 9:11-12

9:11 I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not given to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill;— *"I returned and saw"...* means, I again saw; I have seen something else; I resumed my investigation under the sun, that...

- the race is not given to the swift,—This race is not given to the one who can get done the fastest.
- nor the battle to the strong,—All our battles are in God's hands. Our fleshly strength can't handle it.
- neither is bread to the wise,—Our Word comes from the counsel of God.
- nor riches to men of understanding,—We don't have to be rich to win the race.
- nor favor to men of skill—Our favor is in God's hands.

...but time and chance happeneth to them all. Evil times and unfavorable circumstances fall on each of these, and they come with alarming suddenness. Time (moment) and chance (opportunity) happens to them all; for there is a certain "time" fixed by the Lord for every event. The word "*chance*" also means "*occurrence or event.*" God has a time for everything (3:1-8), a purpose to be fulfilled in that time, and something beautiful to come out of it in the end. You may be in the right place at the right time to get a job, and ability had very little to do with it. Time and chance are in God's hands. ³But in this time (moment) and chance (opportunity) there is incident (what may fall in), and occurrence (what may meet and frustrate an attempt). These things should be wisely weighed, and seriously balanced. It may be God's interruptions. But while you have time, seek an opportunity to do what is right; calculate on hindrances and oppositions, because time and opportunity have their incidents and occurrences.

9:12 For man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth suddenly upon them. Rest assured that trouble comes on the scene, and wreck plans, and man knows not his time. ⁴Fish often swim unaware of the net closing around them until escape is impossible. Birds are caught by traps concealed in places that appear safe. An evil time is a season of distress, judgment, violence, disease, loss, or death in a fallen world. Such days do not prove that God has lost control; they reveal humanity's frailty and the urgent need to live wisely before Him. Believers are called to

³ <http://www.bibletools.org/index.cfm/fuseaction/Bible.show/sVerseID/17487/eVerseID/17487/RTD/Clarke>

⁴ <https://biblehub.com/ecclesiastes/9-12.htm>

<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>





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redeem the time because the days are evil, walking carefully according to God's will (Ephesians 5:15-17). Disaster may arrive without notice, leaving no opportunity to revise a wasted life or prepare a neglected soul. Christ likewise warned that His return will come unexpectedly and commanded His followers to remain ready (Matthew 24:44). Now is the time to repent and be ready and man is suddenly ensnared by death, as birds by traps, and fish are by a net. This illustrates the suddenness and inevitability of death or misfortune. Though it is fixed and settled by the Lord, yet times and seasons are kept in God's own power, and not known by man. Just when you think you have something under control, it can all fall apart. This fact reveals man's ignorance and his helplessness. Remember this: How uncertain life is without God!

II. ECCLESIASTES 9:13-16

9:13 This wisdom have I seen also under the sun, and it seemed great unto me: Here's another case of wisdom Solomon's seen on earth; He's saying, *'I have observed this wisdom and it left a great impression on me.'* People can say many things, but sometimes it doesn't leave an impression of greatness, unless the Spirit of God quickens it in your spirit. When wisdom is given, it is supposed to leave you with understanding, and it is to leave you knowing that there is something else you didn't know. So, take heed because true wisdom from God will turn awesome things around. He only gives it to those under the sun, that is, while you live. It's not given to the dead. The next verse will show how wisdom of a poor wise man seemed great.

9:14 There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it. The name of the city was not even given, and numbers don't mean anything to God, for it says *"few men within it."* The little history mentioned here may have either been a fact, or intended as an instructive fable or parable. When I look at this city with few men, know the enemy, the devil is bound to attack. He comes in to take hold of, and overwhelm you by building great strongholds; by erecting great walls. When strongholds have taken hold of a city, a home, or an individual, what do you do? What action do you take? Do you use your strength or God's wisdom? It says, *"there came a great king."* A king is mighty, coming in to take over. I don't know if there was disobedience in the city, but we can look at Adam and his disobedience to God (Gen.3); Achan sinned and brought defeat on the army of Israel (Josh.7); David's sin brought trouble to Israel (2 Sam.24), and the revolt of Absalom led the nation into a civil war (2 Sam.15). Why would a great king want such a little city with few men? Well, the word would probably be *"greed"* because he surely wasn't afraid of them. And he surely didn't count on one poor wise man (next verse).

9:15 Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. Yet again, the name of the man was not even given. God's hero, His hidden treasure was this poor wise man who is ready to do his part, even though men will despise him, refuse to hear his words, and ultimately forget him. Such a man is, however, a man compelled by a sense of duty. He continues to speak the words of wisdom, regardless of the response of others. He is the Preacher of wisdom who delivered the city. In the Book of Esther, there were those that plotted to kill the king, but Mordecai, a poor Jew saved the king, but was never rewarded for his faithful duty, until God revealed it to the king in a dream. Can you remember when Jesus delivered you? It was not by your might or power,





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but by God's Spirit. Our abilities are no guarantee of success. It is only through God's Son that we are saved and set free. You can't forget God's grace, yet, many do. Jesus suffered; delivered us from the Law and its condemnation, and died because of love. In this verse, no man remembered this poor man. ⁵It never once entered into their thoughts that he could ever be their deliverer. They never imagined he had the capacity to advise, direct, or assist in such service, or bring about such actions. Let's look at Jesus when He appeared in the world, the Jews saw nothing that was promising in Him. They could not believe that He was sent to be the Saviour and Deliverer of them, and therefore they rejected Him.

9:16 Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard. From the scenario in verse 14, we saw the contrast of a small city with few men against a great king; in verse 15, a poor wise man delivering a city against a great king, but was never remembered. Wow! A **city** can represent any community or society that stand to benefit. And in this verse the contrast is between wisdom and strength. The Teacher/Preacher, Solomon's summation is that wisdom is better than strength. He understood from viewing this situation, a man by his wisdom may affect what he could never accomplish by his strength. Now that's something to think about. Nevertheless (*on the other hand*), this poor man is regarded with contempt even after delivering them from the snare of the enemy (v.12). His words of wisdom are despised; treating something as worthless, but regarded at one time, but they are not even heeded now. Most people would listen to the wise man, if he was wealthy, but we see they have no respect for the poor man. Esau despised his birthright because he treated his spiritual inheritance as less valuable than a bowl of stew (Gen.25:34). The Suffering Messiah was despised and rejected by man (and His Words were not heard (Is.53:3). For the poor wise man (v.15) poverty carried little honor in the eyes of men. Israel often ignored the prophets because their messages confronted sin. Be careful of what you call worthless! Even when unrecognized, the wisdom of God, who gives generously to those who ask, has the power to influence and save.

III. ECCLESIASTES 9:17-18

9:17 The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools. Can we contrast the quiet voice vs the loud voice and the wise man vs the ruling fool? You see, a quiet voice will tend to quieten things down against those who want to be loud. Have you seen the commercial where the woman is speaking to her dog? She says "*use your quiet voice*" (*smile*). Well, a dog only knows how to use his yapping voice. That's all! (*smile*). A wise man who speaks the truth through wisdom from God will be heard, and they may not always be received, but God will somehow bring back those words spoken to the hearer's remembrance. Even though people are drawn to loud voices, they will not hold your attention if they're not saying anything constructive. A fool shouting will be ignored. You would shut off your hearing from the fool. He has nothing of profit to say, even if the fool is a king or a president, for those who hear him, will not receive his message. However, wise men hear from God and know when to speak at the right time, for God's plan is more profound than the one who is trying to exercise authority among fools. Think about it, which message do you want to get over, and what message will they get? When our Words began to get loud, just remember the calm Words of the wise.

⁵ <http://bible.cc/ecclesiastes/9-15.htm>
<http://www.pitwm.net/pitwm-versebyverse.html>





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9:18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good. All I heard was Wisdom is better! Using weapons of war too hastily would destroy all the good that had been accomplished, and still could be accomplished through the wisdom of men. The grave error would be that individuals did not sit down to communicate first. One sinner speaking adversely (*harmfully, unfavorably*); being subversive, meaning *he is rebellious and, insubordinate* in his actions or so-called wisdom, and can destroy forever themselves and others who believe him, thereby dragging all to hell with him. One sinner can destroy much good. And we're looking at that occurring now! It's like one rotten apple affecting the whole barrel. It shows that one's disobedience destroys much good! When we look at our government and those placed in office to help us, we see that they are really starting wars with their antics. The way of wisdom is still the better way, and who has that wisdom? Well, it comes from God and it's contrary to earthly wisdom or human strength!

You can hear God's wisdom by reading the bible, and asking Him for understanding, but if you don't apply it, it becomes futile; pointless. Just reading and not operating in it: Right becomes wrong, and wrong become right! *1 Corinthians 5:6 says Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Ecclesiastes 7:19 says Wisdom strengtheneth the wise more than ten mighty men which are in the city.* Where are the wise?

God has a purpose in it all. if he chooses not to intervene, then so be it! But our trust is still in God's Wisdom! Everyone has their day before the LORD! And Wisdom still wins! The enemy thought he won over Jesus Christ, but One Word, Jesus Christ won it All, with All power in His Hand! Truth will always Win! Jesus Christ is Truth!

SUMMARY:

Wisdom is pre-eminent though often unappreciated. Life's decisions sometimes come from common sources which we didn't think to rely on. Wisdom was important enough against a great king. It's important enough against the strength of the mightiest. It's important against the cry of the ruler of fools. And it's important against weapons of war. By it being unappreciated, sometimes it means that it will be overlooked, not received by many, but their ears heard it even though they didn't want to. The superiority of wisdom is still vulnerable to neglect, and it can easily be overshadowed by loud voices or one sinner. It proves that subversive wisdom will lead you straight to hell along with others that want to be rebellious, thereby leaving the claim that people hear what they want to hear. On the other hand, God's wisdom does not turn you away from truth. God's wisdom allows you to learn something you didn't know at first. God's wisdom will be spoken quietly in your inner spirit, and your actions will always turn out right for you and those around you.

APPLICATION:

In these days and times, it pays to listen from the heart instead of from the head.

