

Go on for God Anyway

Ecclesiastes 8:9 – 9:18

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Introduction:

In our Sermon Series in Ecclesiastes, we will pick up today in the middle of chapter 8—chapter 8, verse 9.

- Here Solomon brings up some hard realities about the way things are in this vain world...
 - Hard realities that might discourage us in our service to God.
 - He is very good about facing hard realities and here he is basically going to show us that our service to God in this vain world at least sometimes brings us no appreciable benefit—in this vain world.
- Solomon is so frank that he is often accused of being a desperate pessimist—a deeply discouraged man who is venting his frustrations.
 - Many liberal commentators read him this way.
 - And there is good reason for them to look at it like this.
 - These men have no hope in the afterlife—
 - so if there is no appreciable benefit that comes from serving God in this world, then for them there is no reason to serve Him at all!
- This is very much what Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 15—the passage we read earlier...
 - He is chiding those who deny the resurrection and showing that without it, all our service to God is in vain!
 - It is true that there is blessing in this life for many believers—that godliness does often have its immediate rewards—
 - but not always as the lives of so many of God’s best servants show...
 - Paul goes so far as to say that if he and the other apostles only have hope in this life, then they are of all men most miserable!
 - There is no point at all in their labours and their sufferings for Christ if the only reward they have is in this world!
 - But Paul assures us that there is a resurrection and a world to come!
 - Jesus Christ has risen from the dead—He is the start of the resurrection—the first fruits, the first one to be raised as our captain...
 - Because He is raised, all of us who have come to Him for salvation can be sure that we also will be raised...
 - It is absolutely certain.
 - And after going on to defend the resurrection at length, Paul draws a very motivating conclusion for all who serve the Lord...

- In 1 Corinthians 15:58, he says:
 - **1 Cor 15:58: Therefore, my beloved brethren** [because there is a resurrection], **be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.**
- That is great to say—and it is all true—
 - but it sure can be discouraging when you have to just keep going on without seeing much tangible blessing from your service to the Lord!
 - Paul knew about this discouragement—but he did not let it stop him.
- And even more—neither did Jesus!
 - Even though He was rejected by the rulers!
 - Even though He had 5000 come to follow Him and then turn away!
 - Even though He had 12 confused disciples who could not grasp His message, and one of them was a traitor!
 - Even though He ended up on a cross after only three short years of ministry, rejected by His own people and in a sense rejected by the Father for a time!
 - He knew the discouragement of this vain world, but He did not let that stop Him!
 - He believed in the resurrection.

Today in Ecclesiastes we are going to look at five hard realities that could potentially discourage us in our service to God.

- But I am going to show you that we have reason to go on for God anyway!
- We know that God will accept our labour and will reward us at the resurrection.

Listen now as I read to you from our text...beginning with Ecclesiastes 8:9.

Ecclesiastes 8:9 – 9:18: All this I have seen, and applied my heart to every work that is done under the sun: *There is* a time in which one man rules over another to his own hurt. ¹⁰ Then I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of holiness, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done. This also *is* vanity. ¹¹ Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. ¹² Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his *days* are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. ¹³ But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong *his* days, *which are* as a shadow, because he does not fear before God. ¹⁴ There is a vanity which occurs on earth, that there are just *men* to whom it happens

according to the work of the wicked; again, there are wicked *men* to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. I said that this also *is* vanity. ¹⁵ So I commended enjoyment, because a man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry; for this will remain with him in his labor *all* the days of his life which God gives him under the sun. ¹⁶ When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth, even though one sees no sleep day or night, ¹⁷ then I saw all the work of God, that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. For though a man labors to discover *it*, yet he will not find *it*; moreover, though a wise *man* attempts to know *it*, he will not be able to find *it*. ^{9:1} For I considered all this in my heart, so that I could declare it all: that the righteous and

the wise and their works *are* in the hand of God. People know neither love nor hatred by anything *they see* before them. ² All things *come* alike to all: One event *happens* to the righteous and the wicked; to the good, the clean, and the unclean; to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As is the good, so *is* the sinner; he who takes an oath as *he* who fears an oath. ³ This *is* an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing *happens* to all. Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness *is* in their hearts while they live, and after that *they go* to the dead. ⁴ But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. ⁵ For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. ⁶ Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished; nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun. ⁷ Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already accepted your works. ⁸ Let your garments always be white, and let your head lack no oil. ⁹ Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity;

for that *is* your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun. ¹⁰ Whatever your hand finds to do, do *it* with your might; for *there is* no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going. ¹¹ I returned and saw under the sun that—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 men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all. ¹² For man also does not know his time: Like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men *are* snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them. ¹³ This wisdom I have also seen under the sun, and it *seemed* great to me: ¹⁴ *There was* a little city with few men in it; and a great king came against it, besieged it, and built great snares around it. ¹⁵ Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that same poor man. ¹⁶ Then I said: “Wisdom *is* better than strength. Nevertheless the poor man’s wisdom *is* despised, and his words are not heard. ¹⁷ Words of the wise, *spoken* quietly, *should be* heard rather than the shout of a ruler of fools. ¹⁸ Wisdom *is* better than weapons of war; but one sinner destroys much good.”

May the LORD bless to us the reading of His holy Word.

From this text, we are going to look at five hard realities that have potential to discourage us in our service to the Lord...

- But I am going to introduce each of them with the exhortation to go on—with the words, “Go on for God even though...”
 - In other words, we should not let any of these hard realities hinder our service to our Lord...
- Here is the first...

I. Go on for God even though the wicked often go unpunished in this vain world.

A. Our passage opens with a wicked ruler who dies in honour!

1. Here is a man who, as verse 9 says, rules over others—
 - We looked at this verse briefly last week, and I pointed out to you that the word *rule* here is to domineer over—
 - it speaks of an oppressive kind of rule...

- And you see that the fellow exercises this rule to his own hurt—
 - or it could also be translated that he rules over another to the hurt of the one that is ruled.
 - It is ambiguous in that regard...but...
2. This wicked destructive ruler is given honour even at his funeral!
- You see in verse 10 that Solomon sees the wicked buried—burial was a way of showing honor to the dead...
 - And you see where it says that the fellow went back and forth from the place of holiness—which probably refers to the tribunal or judgment seat...
 - It is the place of the holy one—where judgement is rendered for God as His vice-regent—and this man had served in that seat wickedly...
 - But at his funeral, this man is *praised*—
 - The word translated *forgotten* is translated in many of the manuscripts, as well as in the Septuagint, as *praised*...
 - In any case, he is buried in great honour as a righteous man.
 - And if *forgotten* is the preferred reading, then it is to highlight the contrast between his fine burial and that he is forgotten.
 - It is a very common scene...
 - A wicked man dies and all of the sudden he is a saint—he is surely now in a better place—no one remembers his wickedness.
 - One preacher described it as justification by death!
 - The fellow was never justified by faith, but judging from all that is said about him at his funeral, everyone seems to think that he is justified by death—all his wickedness is taken off the record.
3. Solomon says that this is vanity!
- Indeed it is!
 - It is as if, judging from the funeral, it doesn't even matter if you do wickedly all your life—it will all work out in the end.
 - That is the delusion of the multitude!
 - They all want to think that once people die, they are in a better place.
 - They are comfortable with this, even if the fellow oppressed them a bit, because if he is okay now, it makes them suppose that they will be okay when they die.
 - It makes them think that they don't need to come to Christ to be justified by His saving work!
- B. And the delusion of the masses about this is increased when they see sin go unpunished!
- Verse 11 says:
 - **Ecc 8:11: Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.**

1. People dream that if judgement does not come immediately, perhaps it will never come at all!
 - And as they convince themselves more and more of this, they commit more and more wickedness.
 - You can see how this works by looking at a non-moral issue...
 - If you park overtime in parking spot a few times and you never get a ticket for it,
 - you will do it more and more!
 - Or take a young man that goes in the military who could never get out of bed in the morning...
 - All of the sudden he can get out of bed—because there are consequences if he doesn't!
2. People get worse and worse when there are no immediate consequences...
 - I was impressed by a story in a small town where college students were fighting outside a bar and immediately stopped when a police car drove by. These kids were not yet hardened to the cops.
 - I have friend who is a cop in a larger city and he says that people don't stop even when he gets out and tells them to stop—they will even curse him or strike him at times...
 - because they know that there won't be any consequences—maybe a night in jail—
 - There is a sinful boldness in sinning that grows the longer judgement is delayed...
 - Parents, let this be a lesson to you to not let things go with your children—when you do, you send them the message that sin is okay.
 - We are seeing the fruits of our permissive society and it is not pretty.
 - There's a terrible hardness that develops when we are not restrained by punishments.
 - There is no telling what people would do if there was no law enforcement!

C. But Christian, you know better than this! You know that there are consequences.

1. You know what Solomon knows! He says:
 - **Ecc 8:12-13: Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. ¹³ But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he does not fear before God.**
2. Those who do not fear God do not believe that God will do anything!
 - They suppose that He either does not notice or does not care because, after all, people do all kinds of stuff and nothing ever happens!
 - But you know that there is God in heaven who will judge everything!

- You know that He has appointed a day in which He will judge both the just and the unjust.
 - You know that He sees everything, even the thoughts and intents of our hearts!
 - You know that it will not go well with the unrighteous!
 - You know that the only way to prepare for the day of judgement is to come to Jesus Christ to be justified and converted!
3. So keep on serving God faithfully in Christ—never suppose that just because there are no immediate consequences God is okay with your sin.

TRANS> Now let's move on to consider the second hard reality...

II. Go on for God even though it is sometimes the case that it goes better for the wicked than it does for the righteous in this vain world.

A. It is true. The wicked not only go unpunished, but very often they seem to be rewarded and the righteous punished!

- He speaks of this in verse 14:
 - **Ecc 8:14: There is a vanity which occurs on earth, that there are just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked; again, there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity.**
- It can be very frustrating when you are trying to serve God and struggling to pay the bills and afflicted with physical infirmities—
 - And then you see a wicked man who has no fear of God and everything seems to be going very well for him...
 - It is easy to say, “What profit is there in serving God?”
 - This reality can cause you to slacken your service—but it shouldn't.

B. Solomon has three pieces of advice when you see this...

1. First, in verse 15, he tells you to just go ahead and enjoy whatever God has given you in this world...
 - **Ecc 8:15: So I commended enjoyment, because a man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry; for this will remain with him in his labor all the days of his life which God gives him under the sun.**
 - God gives you the portion that He has determined and it is for you to simply receive it with thanksgiving—
 - This is great advice...
 - Doug Wilson speaks about the rich kid with a room full of toys sulking and saying that he is bored...
 - while his counterpart—a poor kid, cheerfully entertains himself all afternoon in the back yard with only a stick in his hand.
 - Just enjoy what you have with thanksgiving!

➤ That is the first piece of advice...

2. The second is that it is futile for you to try to figure out why one person has more than you and another has less.
 - a. In verse 16 & 17 Solomon explains that he gave himself to trying to figure this out, but could make no sense of it.
 - He says that no matter how hard you try, you will never be able to sort it all out—so don't bother!
 - If you spend your time trying to figure out why God has distributed things the way He has,
 - it will keep you from being able to enjoy what He has given you!
 - b. What you can be sure of, according to verse 1, is that if you are righteous and wise, both you as well as your works are in the hand of God...
 - If you are in Christ Jesus, you are under the special care of the LORD...
 - He is working in you for your good—He is giving you what is best for you, even though it may be harder than what the wicked have.
 - He also knows your works and He will not forget them.
 - He will remember even a cup of cold water given in Jesus' name.
 - He will reward you at the appointed time.
 - So don't exasperate yourself trying to figure out why wicked persons around you may be getting along better than you are.
 - Things won't be sorted out until the judgement day.
- And furthermore...
3. Don't try to determine if God loves you or not by your prosperity.
 - a. At the end of verse 1, Solomon says:
 - **Ecc 9:1: People know neither love nor hatred by anything they see before them.**
 - God's distinguishing love is not demonstrated by whether or not you get close parking places or rain on your day off or great riches...
 - It is demonstrated by His sending of Jesus while we were yet sinners to die for our sins that we might be pardoned.
 - It is demonstrated by His effectual calling of us to Himself so that we have come to Jesus....
 - It is demonstrated by His sure promise to us that He has freely justified us if we have faith in Jesus—
 - that all our sins are forgiven and that He is now working in us to make us more like Jesus.
 - Don't try to judge what He thinks of you by how wealthy you are or by how healthy you are.
 - b. Your present prosperity is no way to tell God's acceptance because (as verse 2 says) **"all things come alike to all!"** in this vain world...

- **Ecc 9:2: One event happens to the righteous and the wicked; to the good, the clean, and the unclean; to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As is the good, so is the sinner; he who takes an oath as he who fears an oath.**
- Think about it...
 - Josiah dies in war as well as Ahab,
 - Moses dies in the wilderness as well as the murmurers,
 - Abraham is rich but so is Nabal,
 - Solomon is wise, but so is Ahithophel,
 - Joseph is honoured by Pharaoh, but so is Doeg by Saul.
 - Jesus is hung from a tree and so is Judas!

➤ Clearly, God does not show which of us is accepted and which is rejected by our prosperity or lack thereof!

c. What really makes this certain is the fact that in the end, everyone dies!

- There are no exceptions...
 - In the end, there is not one person that prospers in this world because all die—
 - Then they lose everything.

➤ And that brings us to our third point...that you should...

III. Go on for God even though you know you are going to die anyway.

A. People who don't believe in the resurrection really don't have any reason to serve the LORD.

1. They would say, "What difference does it make if I serve God?"

- "I will die just the same whether I do or whether I don't and it will all be over, so why should I bother with it?"
- We have already seen that there is sometimes no appreciable difference in how the righteous or the wicked get on in this world...
 - and since they both die, what's the use in troubling about the Lord?
 - He doesn't seem to care what we do anyway if He is there at all.

2. Paul himself said that if there is no resurrection, what is the use of all of his sufferings for Jesus?

- He might as well live it up—
- Solomon explains that this is, in fact, how people live in Ecc. 9:3:
 - **Ecc 9:3: This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing happens to all. Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.**
 - Here are those who just go on in their wickedness because they are going to die anyway and, as far as they see it, it will all be over!

B. But Solomon points to death as a motivation for those who fear God to live with all the more zeal for Him!

- The time is short, so we need to make the most of the time we have...
 - The day will soon come when our work on earth will be over and then it will be too late to do any more either good or bad.
 - But as long as we remain, we can labour in hope...
 - The whole section from verse 4 to verse 10 is about this...
1. In verses 4-6, he shows us that we only get to live once...and then there is nothing more that we can do...
 - **4 But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.**
 - Even if you only have the strength of a dog,
 - you can do more for the Lord than you could if you had the strength of a lion but were dead!
 - **5 & 6: For the living know that they will die; but the dead know nothing, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. 6 Also their love, their hatred, and their envy have now perished; nevermore will they have a share in anything done under the sun.**
 - When it comes to this world and our service here, once we are gone—
 - Whatever we may have been doing under the sun is over—finished—unable to be amended.
 - This is a fearful thought if you fear God!
 - You can't go back and live your life over—what you have done you have done...
 - And now you must stand before your maker with that!
 - If you came to Christ, you came to Christ, if you did not, you did not, and you can't go over your life again.
 - As long as you are alive—there is something you can do! But after you die, all opportunity is lost forever!
 - What Solomon said back in chapter 8, verse 12 & 13 must not be forgotten here...
 - Even though the righteous and the wicked may both get along much the same in this world...
 - It will surely go well for the one that fears God and it will surely not go well for the one who doesn't...
 - Solomon knows that there is a judgement to come when all things will be sorted out...
 - So we need to live zealously for God during the short time that we are here...
 2. So in verse 7-10, Solomon advises us to live life to the fullest before Him.
 - a. In verse 7 & 8, he speaks of our food and our clothing...

- **Ecc 9:7-8: Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already accepted your works. ⁸ Let your garments always be white, and let your head lack no oil.**
 - God wants you to take the good gifts that He has given to you and use them for His glory...
 - We are to enjoy His gifts and we are to take care of our clothes and anoint ourselves with oil—in other words, don’t let yourself go—you are here for the Lord!
 - He is the one who has given us bread and wine and oil to make us glad, and we are to receive it with joy and thanksgiving from His hand.
 - Our joy grows out of the fact that God, in His marvellous grace, has accepted our works...
 - The people in the Old Testament had the token of God’s acceptance in their ordinances at the temple...
 - But we have the full assurance given to us in God’s acceptance of Christ our mediator whom He has raised from the dead!
 - This is the basis for our joy in this world where our lot is not much different than the wicked.
 - The difference, however, is that we are not living only for this world.
 - We can rejoice in the gifts of God here and now because we know that this is not all there is for us!
 - If it were, we would have no grounds for true joy because all that we have would soon be taken from us.
- b. And in verse 9, he speaks of living in marriage as God has appointed—not with many wives as Solomon had done, but with the wife whom we love—all the days of our life...
- **9 Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun.**
 - This is God’s calling—this is what He has appointed for us in this world and we are to enjoy it in this world...
 - But note well—we need to put it in perspective...
 - Our marriage is only for **all the days of our vain life under the sun!**
 - These words remind us that we are not to make an idol out of what God has given us under the sun...
 - So men, tell your wife, “I love you for all the days of my vain life under the sun!”
 - That is the biblical thing to put on your valentine’s card to your wife—not “I love you forever!”
 - That is what idolaters say—they only have their portion in this life.

- And the ironic thing is that because they do, they ask too much of the good things of this life—
 - They are never satisfied because this is all they have.
 - They want to get more out of a wine bottle or a meal or sex or oil than what God has appointed for us...
 - And so they drink to excess—it is all they have—
 - And they run after the perfect relationship—and they get frustrated with it and they go for one after another...
 - or they become bitter with disappointment...
 - But you see, we are rather to enjoy what God has given us...
 - We are not to ask more from it than what it is: *our portion in this vain world...*
 - And when we don't ask too much of it, then we will be able to truly enjoy it *as God gave it!*
- c. And in verse 10, he tells us to do all of our work with diligence—for God and not for man...for the time is short...
- **Ecc 9:10: Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going.**
 - As we saw in our New Testament reading, our labour in the LORD is not in vain because there is a resurrection...
 - But understand that once you die, there is no more labour that you can do for the day of judgement.
 - So be steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the LORD, knowing that in the Lord, your labour is not in vain!

TRANS> That is all well and good—but what about when you work hard and your work under the sun seems to fail?

- That brings us to the next point

IV. Go on for God even though your diligent skilful work for God may fail in this vain world.

A. There are times when all of your efforts do not turn out as expected...

1. Verse 11 speaks of the sad reality...

- **Ecc 9:11: I returned and saw under the sun that—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 men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all.**
- We do not know how our work will turn out...
 - We can seem to have matters under control and they can take a sudden twist on us...

- In verse 12, Solomon compares this to a bird or a fish that gets caught in cruel net...
 - You are swimming along as a fish in the world and things are going quite well—and you see a tasty morsel and you swim toward it...
 - But suddenly the cruel net closes in on you and all your hopes are dashed to pieces.
2. I have already shown you that you must not expect too much in this vain, fallen world.
- There are times when you labour hard in the fear of God and your labour fails...
 - You are a farmer and you plant your crops with skill and wisdom and with hope and prayer to God, and your crop is destroyed by a storm just before the harvest...
 - You go to school and you work hard, but you are failed because you don't meet the criteria of political correctness...
 - You seek to live to the glory of God with your spouse, but your spouse refuses to join you and leaves you...
 - You start a business and it goes under—it fails...
 - You have people over for dinner and you engage them in conversation about Jesus, but they reject Him—and you too!
 - You go to a brother who is overtaken in a fault to restore him, and he despises you and apostatises...
- B. This reality of life can discourage you and make you want to give up!
1. You can become depressed like poor Elijah...*why should I even try?*
- All his life he had laboured for the Lord and then at last on Mt. Carmel he confronted the prophets of Baal and showed everyone that the LORD was the only true God...It was a great victory!
 - Surely now everyone would follow the LORD...
 - Now Israel would be restored to the true and living God!
 - But no!
 - Instead, Jezebel sends murder threats against the prophet—and nobody seems to repent!
 - How discouraging!
 - So Elijah goes off to pout...
 - And the LORD comes says, “Elijah, what are you doing here?”
 - And Elijah says:
 - **1 Kings 19:10: “I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life.”**

- But the Lord tells him plainly that it is not the day for revival—but only for a small voice to be heard...
 - God had a purpose for Israel’s rebellion at that time and it was only for Elijah to serve the Lord by doing what He commanded...
 - The results were not in Elijah’s hand...
 - It was for him to labour faithfully.
2. The same is true for you!
- Yes, it can be very discouraging when you labour diligently and nothing comes of your labours in this world...
 - But leave that to God!
 - Your labour in the LORD is not in vain, so don’t let the results that come in this vain world discourage you...
 - Pour yourself out to the Lord.
 - If Christ had gone by the results that He had from His labours during His earthly ministry,
 - He would surely have given up.
 - You have no right to give up—it is God’s work—and you are to go on for Him as long as you have breath!
 - Your labour in the Lord is not in vain.

TRANS> Go on for God, even when your labour brings forth no fruit in this world.

- Never ever give up...
 - That is the fourth thing we may learn from this passage...
 - And now the fifth...

V. Go on for God even though your best service may not ever be recognized in this vain world.

A. How often you hear of people giving up because they felt that they were not appreciated...

1. Perhaps they were not—but what difference does that make if you are labouring for the LORD?
 - A wife will say, “I try and try and try, but my husband never thanks me.”
 - A husband will say, “No matter what I do, she is never satisfied.”
 - You hear this kind of talk from pastors, employees, friends, neighbours, people serving in the church—
2. Solomon tells a little story about this in verse 13-15...
 - There is a poor man who delivers the city from destruction by his wisdom, but nobody notices him...
 - He gets no reward, no holidays named after him, nothing...
 - He is simply ignored and forgotten.
 - This is not at all uncommon.
 - Many who do the greatest service get the least amount of recognition...

- B. And not only that, but there are also times when you have wisdom and you know what needs to be done...
- And you try to present your arguments, but nobody will listen to you.
1. Perhaps you are with a group of women and they are encouraging a woman in their midst to divorce her husband...
 - You have God's word and you know that their advice is worthless...
 - You try to present your case, but they want nothing to do with what you have to say.
 - It is frustrating because nobody will listen to you...
 - There is some loud confident person who has a degree in marriage counseling and everyone listens to her instead of to you.
 2. Solomon describes this in verses 16-18...
 - **16 Then I said: "Wisdom is better than strength. Nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard."**
 - You have the right answer, but nobody wants to hear it...
 - **17 Words of the wise, spoken quietly, should be heard rather than the shout of a ruler of fools.**
 - What you are saying ought to be heard, but there is a ruler of fools with a loud voice—and that is what everyone hears...
 - **18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war; But one sinner destroys much good.**
 - What you were saying could have done much good if only it had been followed—
 - but it only takes one sinner—the ruler of fools with the loud voice—to frustrate your counsel.
 3. This is so discouraging—it can make you give up!
 - But don't!
 - It may be that at least someone will come to see that you were right.
 - Perhaps they will see it after observing the fruit of all the bad advice.
 - But leave that God.
 - Don't try to force the issue—you have to leave it with God.
 - Just keep on speaking the truth even if nobody hears you, and you will be like the prophets who were recognized after they died.
 - Not only that, but the LORD will reward you...
 - Your labour in the LORD is never in vain!

Conclusion

And brothers and sisters, that is the message today...

- Do not let anything stop you from serving the LORD...
 - not that the wicked often go unpunished in this vain world...
 - nor that they are often better off than the righteous...
 - nor that you are going to die anyway...

- nor that you can work very hard and still fail...
- nor that you obtain no recognition for your service and wisdom.
- The LORD Jesus endured all of those things...
 - And you are His servant and a servant is not greater than his master.
 - Don't suppose that it should go better for you than it did for Him.
- You fumble along, but Jesus never faltered in doing the Lord's work...
 - Your righteousness is in Him if indeed you are trusting in Him.
 - So even though your labour is not all that it should be, it is accepted by God through Christ and that ought to encourage you to go on in the face of all difficulties.
 - It is those who have faith in God's promises and grace that do the most for Him—not the ones who have the most self-confidence.
 - The great catalogue of faith in Hebrews 11 consists of those who saw little during their lifetime, but firmly believed that God would do what He said.
 - In the LORD, your labour is never in vain...
 - So be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord!