

You're Alive! Act like It

Ecclesiastes Part 12

Ecclesiastes 9:2-10:1 3-2-2014

Summary: Everyone dies, and death is a fate worse than life, even when life is very hard. As long as you are alive, things can still change. So enjoy food, drink, clothes, refreshments, marriage and relationships, and work, which is opportunity. Death, time, chance, and fools can strike at any moment, so enjoy the present while you can.

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9:1 Indeed, I took all this to heart and explained it all: the righteous, the wise, and their works are in God's hands. People don't know whether to expect love or hate. Everything lies ahead of them. **2** Everything is the same for everyone: there is one fate for the righteous and the wicked, for the good and the bad, for the clean and the unclean, for the one who sacrifices and the one who does not sacrifice. As it is for the good, so it is for the sinner; as for the one who takes an oath, so for the one who fears an oath. **3** This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: there is one fate for everyone. In addition, the hearts of people are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live-- after that they go to the dead. **4** But there is hope for whoever is joined with all the living, since a live dog is better than a dead lion. **5** For the living know that they will die, but the dead don't know anything. There is no longer a reward for them because the memory of them is forgotten. **6** Their love, their hate, and their envy have already disappeared, and there is no longer a portion for them in all that is done under the sun. **7** Go, eat your bread with pleasure, and drink your wine with a cheerful heart, for God has already accepted your works. **8** Let your clothes be white all the time, and never let oil be lacking on your head. **9** Enjoy life with the wife you love all the days of your fleeting life, which has been given to you under the sun, all your fleeting days. For that is your portion in life and in your struggle under the sun. **10** Whatever your hands find to do, do with all your strength, because there is no work, planning, knowledge, or wisdom in Sheol where you are going. **11** Again I saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, or the battle to the strong, or bread to the wise, or riches to the discerning, or favor to the skillful; rather, time and chance happen to all of them. **12** For man certainly does not know his time: like fish caught in a cruel net or like birds caught in a trap, so people are trapped in an evil time as it suddenly falls on them. **13** I have observed that this also is wisdom under the sun, and it is significant to me: **14** There was a small city with few men in it. A great king came against it, surrounded it, and built large siege works against it. **15** Now a poor wise man was found in the city, and he delivered the city by his

wisdom. Yet no one remembered that poor man. 16 And I said, "Wisdom is better than strength, but the wisdom of the poor man is despised, and his words are not heeded." 17 The calm words of the wise are heeded more than the shouts of a ruler over fools. 18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner can destroy much good. 10:1 Dead flies make a perfumer's oil ferment and stink; so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

Introduction: God Gives Life

In this church, the most important thing to us is loving God more, and the way to do that is to focus our attention on what God is like – His attributes. Do you enjoy learning more and more attributes of God? Here is one for you:

Acts 17:28 For in him we live and move and have our being.

God is the author of life, and our living and moving and having our being is a wonderful gift from Him, amen? Some of you might have hesitated a bit on that particular "amen," because your life right now doesn't seem like a wonderful gift. It feels more like a curse. How do we reconcile the idea that life is a good gift from God with the reality that this life is battered by trouble in a cursed, fallen, futile world? None of that exists in heaven. If you know Jesus Christ and all your sins are forgiven, then going to be with the Lord will be better than this life by far. So why stay alive? Why keep going in this hard, painful life? In what sense is this life in this fallen, cursed, futile world a wonderful gift from God? Today Solomon is going to answer that question for us. We have been studying through the book of Ecclesiastes, and we come today to chapter 9, which is a chapter designed to teach us how to enjoy this life in light of death. Since death is a reality, how should we live life?

Everybody Dies

9:2 Everything is the same for everyone: there is one fate for the righteous and the wicked, for the good and the bad, for the clean and the unclean, for the one who sacrifices and the one who does not sacrifice. As it is for the good, so it is for the sinner; as for the one who takes an oath, so for the one who fears an oath. 3 This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: there is one fate for everyone.

Solomon is not one bit naïve about the reality of death. Some day you are going to work your last day. At some point you will breathe your last breath, you will think your last thought, and it will be over for you in this life. We are all going to end up in a box. Every single one of us in this room – every person you know, will die. And the worst part about it is this – not only will we all die, but prior to dying we commit all kinds of sins.

3In addition, the hearts of people are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live--after that they go to the dead.

Even the good people, who are righteous and honest – even they have plenty of evil in their hearts when they die. And nothing can be done about that once death arrives.

Death: A Fate Worse than Life

4 But there is hope for whoever is joined with all the living, since a live dog is better than a dead lion.

As long as you are alive, there is hope - things can still change.

Better to Be Alive Even in a Worse Condition

Most people, if you ask them, “Which would you rather be – a lion or a dog?” would say, “I’d rather be a lion.” Lions are strong and fierce and impressive and feared – Christ is described as a majestic lion. But dogs in that culture were unclean, defiled, ugly, filthy mongrels that ate garbage. Lion or dog is a no-brainer – much better to be a lion ... unless the lion is dead. Then it is better to be the dog. The point he is making is it is better to be alive than dead even if you have to live in a really crummy condition. As hard as your life might be, death is a fate worse than life.

“But what about heaven? Doesn’t Philippians 1 tell us that to depart and be with Christ is better by far? Is Solomon contradicting that?”

No. We have seen all through this book that he is speaking only in terms of life under the sun, which refers to this life, not the next life. The next life is a whole different topic which is not addressed in this book. When my father was a teenager he postponed giving his life to Christ because he was told, “The reason you should become a Christian is so you will go to heaven when you die.” And when you are a teenager, death seems a long way off, so he figured, “I’ll get to that. But for now I just want to enjoy this life.” The book of Ecclesiastes shows us that following God’s way is not just so you can go to heaven. It is also the best way to live this life here and now. If you live for God’s pleasure, this life can be filled with joy – so much so that it is worth staying alive if you can.

People who attempt suicide would not agree with that. They think that if your living conditions get bad enough, or your life becomes painful enough, it is better to be a dead lion than to live like a dog. But the Preacher says, “No, it’s better to stay alive,” and the reason he gives is not at all what we might expect.

Because Things Can Change

It is in verse 5. Here is why it is better to be alive than dead:

5 For the living know that they will die, but the dead don't know anything.

That’s the great benefit of being alive? Knowing that I’m doomed? Why is knowing that I am going to die such a great benefit that it makes even a hard life worth living? Because when you understand the reality of life and death, you understand that as long as you are still alive, things can change.

4 there is hope for whoever is joined with all the living

If you still have a pulse, then there is hope for you because things can change. But once you die:

5 ...There is no longer a reward for them because the memory of them is forgotten.

The term **reward** probably refers to earning a wage. You cannot work, and before long you are forgotten. Right now there is a place for you in this life where you fit. And there is a group of people who think about you and care whether you are alive or dead. One hundred years from now that won’t be the case. Right now your love and hate and the things you feel and do impact people. But when you are dead:

6 Their love, their hate, and their envy have already disappeared, and there is no longer a portion for them in all that is done under the sun.

Therefore, Enjoy Life!

So what is the conclusion? Same as always. The Preacher will not let up with this message:

7 Go, eat your bread with pleasure, and drink your wine with a cheerful heart, for God has already accepted your works.

Let your awareness of death help you enjoy the gifts of God along the way by reminding you that those gifts are temporary. They will come to an end, so enjoy them while you can. People who put death out of their mind tend to think they have unlimited time to enjoy life, and they become discontent about the present because they are always looking to the future when they think things will be better. But when you can see that death is coming, that enables you to enjoy what can be enjoyed right now.

Food and Drink

And he starts with food and drink. Enjoy food and drink **because God has already accepted your works**. What works? The works he just mentioned - the enjoyment of food and drink and the various temporal gifts of God in life. God has already given His approval to that in Scripture.

Genesis 9:3 Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything.

1 Timothy 6:17 ...God ... richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

The enjoyment of God's gifts already has God's stamp of approval. They are not guilty pleasures – they are godly pleasures. That is not to say we have a green light to enjoy them any way we want. Enjoyment of food is approved by God, but gluttony is a perversion. Enjoyment of money is approved by God, but greed and love of money are perversions. Enjoyment of sex is approved by God, but outside of marriage it is a perversion. God designed each of His gifts to be enjoyed a certain way, and that way cannot be improved upon. And when we try to improve on it and end up abusing that gift, it can be hard to recover. There are some people who have tried to enjoy alcohol the wrong way and now they need to never take another sip. There are some who need to stay away from unhealthy foods for a while. There are some people, who, in order to follow Christ right now, need to get rid of their TV. And every one of us must say no to all kinds of pleasures when they would get in the way of higher goals in our service to Christ. Living the Christian life involves a great deal of self-denial - but never self-denial just for the sake of self-denial. It is always for a reason. And if that reason is not there, then the normal way to respond to God's gifts is to enjoy them. Enjoying them within the boundaries of the way God designed them to be enjoyed is approved by God. And not just food, but all the various gifts of life.

Clothes and Refreshment

8 Let your clothes be white all the time, and never let oil be lacking on your head.

White clothes were hard to keep white in that culture, and so they were reserved mostly for times of festivity. They were party clothes. In our culture this would be like saying, "Put on your tuxedos and evening gowns and dance the night away." Or for some of you maybe it's cowboy boots and a giant belt buckle – however you dress up for a party. And if at this point you are picturing the kind of party where people are getting drunk and there is revelry and immorality, you need to perform a factory reset on your understanding of what partying is. God invented partying. Partying is for celebrating and remembering and enjoying God through the enjoyment of His people and His gifts. The world is not interested in that so they invented a perverse counterfeit that ignores God and abuses His gifts. Any partying that leaves you with less delight in God at the end, and less interested in the Scriptures, and less excited about heaven, and less desire to be around the saints is perverted counterfeit partying and should absolutely be avoided at all cost. Godly partying will do nothing but increase your delight in God and His Word and His people.

So put on your party clothes, and put some oil on your head. Oil on the head was for refreshment. That is how they got "freshened up." It also served the function of perfume or cologne. We do little things to our bodies to make them feel refreshed, and we put on clothes that make us feel good, and as long as those things don't get out of balance in your priorities, they are approved by God.

Some people think that true religion means you walk around looking like you are about to die. The Pharisees used to do that. They would fast, and while they fasted they would forgo things like putting oil on their head so they looked haggard and disheveled, because they thought that is what really spiritual people look like.

“Look how religious I am – I look like a corpse.”

That’s wrong. Enjoy good food and nice clothes that you can afford. And work especially hard at enjoying people.

Marriage

9 Enjoy life with the wife you love all the days of your fleeting life, which has been given to you under the sun, all your fleeting days. For that is your portion in life and in your struggle under the sun.

So much of the enjoyment of life that God intends for us comes through relationships. Do those relationships cause us pain? Yes, all love relationships cause pain. And the more you love, the sharper the pain. The pain is sharper, but the joy is deeper too.

“But it’s not worth it. I’d rather go without that joy just so I can avoid all the pain.”

Maybe you have weighed it out and you have come to the conclusion that love relationships just are not worth the heartache. If that is how you feel, God says, “You are wrong.” We have our ideas of what would make us happiest, and what the best path to joy is, and God has His ideas about the best path to joy for us. Which one are we going to follow – ours or God’s? It depends on who we trust more. If we trust ourselves, we will go with what seems right to us. If we trust God, we will go with what He says is best. And what God says is best is to do the hard work of maintaining relationships, and deal with the heartache and pain involved, so that we can know the joy of profound love.

That principle applies to all love relationships, but the most specific application he gives is in marriage. The marriage relationship is especially holy and sacred because it represents the love between Christ and the Church. So if you are married, that is the first place to put this into practice, because your relationship with your spouse dominates your life. When marriage is right it almost feels like nothing can be wrong. If things are really, really good between you and your spouse, you feel almost invincible. You can handle anything. But when your marriage is bad nothing seems right. And all the sweetness of life is spoiled. And it is absolute insanity to keep things that way.

Don’t forfeit God’s gifts. There are singles in this church who would give their right arm to be able to share a bed with someone tonight. Or to have someone there with them to enjoy dinner with each night. They are living alone and for them it is an excruciating loneliness because they long for a spouse but God has not provided one for them at this time. But for you He has! You have someone to enjoy dinner with, but the last several days (or months) you have forfeited that pleasure because you have not tended to that garden to keep the love alive. Or because you won’t humble yourself and reconcile. Or you won’t seek help from another couple to get you past an impasse. Or because you just won’t let go of some area of selfishness. Or because you are not conforming to God ordained roles. Or a host of other possible reasons. But one way or another, God has provided an opportunity for you to enjoy life with your spouse and that opportunity is being squandered. You have someone to crawl in bed with each night, but you are not taking advantage of it. You have someone whose day you could brighten with a hug and kiss in the morning, but you are passing it up.

Enjoy your spouse. Spend time together as friends. Prize each other as lovers. Value your wife as a person – find out what her greatest fears are and her greatest desires and her greatest hopes – explore her heart. The heart of a woman is not an easy thing to understand, but it is a fascinating thing to explore. Wives, find the things God put into your husband that He intended to be admired, and admire them. Enjoy them.

Work

One more application – work.

10 Whatever your hands find to do, do with all your strength, because there is no work, planning, knowledge, or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.

Enjoy your food, enjoy your clothes, enjoy your wife, and enjoy your work. Whether you are in education or the arts or science or transportation or food preparation or management or HR or janitorial or interior design or fashion or finance or medicine – or if you have the one job that requires every one of those – homemaking; whatever your task, get in to it! Take this job and love it! Learn to enjoy your work. “But I’m working like a dog!”

Better a live dog than dead lion. You are alive! Act like it! That is the message of this chapter. You have the gift of life. And part of that gift includes the gift of work.

Opportunity

And work is opportunity. Raise your hand if you have arms and legs. You know what those arms and legs are? Opportunity! You can do things with your arms and legs and mouth and brain. You can accomplish things and change things and bring about outcomes that would not otherwise happen. Your ability to work is opportunity. That is why even painful life is better than death, because as soon as you die, you lose all that opportunity. In this life there is a lot of opportunity to do things that will impact your situation in eternity – forever and ever and ever and ever. Every bit of reward that you accumulate in this life, for all eternity you will be really glad you did not forfeit that reward. So remaining in this world – in this hard, painful life, is a good thing. And lest you think that is a sub-Christian idea, or just an Old Testament idea, remember that Jesus said the exact same thing.

John 9:4 We must do the works of Him who sent Me while it is day. Night is coming when no one can work.

The time is coming when you will work your last day, and the knowledge of that should serve to motivate us to work hard while we still can. The fact that our days of work and planning and knowledge and wisdom in this life will come to an end should make us zealous to work and plan and exercise knowledge and wisdom.

Every time you use some of your knowledge, every time you do something that is wiser than some other thing – that is a privilege. The opportunity to do that is a gift from God. We don’t always recognize that as one of the joys of life. When we count our blessings, or we make a list of things we are thankful for, we think of family and friends and health and fun and provision and all that. But how often do we say, “You know, one thing I’m really thankful to God for is all these opportunities I have to use wisdom and knowledge”? When you were a kid, you longed to do that. Everything was decided for you, and nothing you did had any real impact on anything. You couldn’t do anything that really mattered, you couldn’t drive anywhere, you couldn’t solve any significant problems. That is what it is like to be a child, and every kid longs for the day when he or she can do real things – things that matter. For a while they are content to pretend – push their little plastic lawnmower behind dad, but before long they realize their little mower doesn’t do anything. And they long to grow up so they can have what you have – ability to do things that matter.

Each one of you has a spiritual gift. You each have various past experiences and knowledge and perspectives on things that no one else has quite like you. You each have a unique kind of wisdom that you can apply to dealing with life. And the ability to use all that – the fact that every day you get to take those resources and make real decisions that have real outcomes that impact eternity – that is a gift from God. But the opportunity to do that in this life is a short-term gift that could come to an end at any time. So work hard! Do not take a half-baked, tentative, reluctant, halting, fits and stops approach to your life task. Don’t go through life hog-tied by people’s expectations or critiques. Use your best judgment on

what God wants you doing right now, at this point in your life, and then get after it. The Apostle Paul often described how hard he worked as an example to us.

Acts 20:35 In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak

Many times he referred to his hard work. And whenever he saw someone else working hard, he took note of it.

Romans 16:6 Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.

12 Greet Tryphena and Tryphosa, those women who work hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, another woman who has worked very hard in the Lord.

Hard work in the Lord is a great virtue. But in a wealthy culture like ours, it is very easy to become lazy. We have invented this 40-hour work week, which is something you do not ever see in the Bible. When Jesus made up a story about a guy who put in a full day's work for a fair day's wage in Matthew 20, the day's work was a 12-hour day. The laborers who only worked nine hours were envied because they ended up getting a full day's wage even though they only put in a partial day. But we have created a situation where people are ready to go on strike because their boss is making them work all the way from 8 to noon without a coffee break.

Laziness is one of those enemies that we have to fight off all day long. When a task gets hard or monotonous, our flesh just wants to take a break and do something easy. And if we give in to that impulse we can get so our whole life becomes a sluggish, lame, halfhearted attempt at living. And that might work if you had unlimited time on this earth, but you don't. Time is short, and so figure out what you are supposed to be doing and roll up your sleeves and enjoy pouring all your ingenuity and effort and wisdom and knowledge and skill and strength into it.

Now is the Time

And do it now, because many of those gifts are only for this life. Earthly pleasures are like the tickets you win playing arcade games at Elitches. You can turn those things in for the little toys at that arcade, but they are no good at all anywhere else. It would be silly to put them in your pocket and save them for the future, because once you leave that arcade they are worthless. Your money and earthly possessions are only good here – in the little arcade of this life. If you pretend death is never going to come, you will postpone your use of those things until it's too late.

For now, you're alive! Act like it.

“But I hate my life.”

Well, that is the beauty of still being alive – things can still change. And things will change, which is another reason to enjoy what there is to enjoy right now because time is running out on the way things are now. Whatever you find yourself doing in this life, do it like the clock is ticking, because it is.

Raise your hand if you have played the game Catch Phrase. In that game someone hands you a disk that is beeping like a time bomb. It shows a word that you have to describe and try to get your team to guess it so you can pass it to the next player before the beeping stops and the buzzer goes off. Whoever is holding it when the buzzer goes loses. And the whole time you are trying to get your team to guess, that beeping gets progressively faster, indicating that you are running out of time. And the kicker is this – it is not consistent from turn to turn. Sometimes it will beep a little faster, then faster, then faster, then faster, and it just keeps going for quite a while. Other times it beeps two or three times fast and then buzzes. It is impossible to predict how much time you have left, but the increasing speed just reminds you that the buzzer could happen at any second and all your hopes for winning that point are dashed. And so the faster that thing beeps, the more urgency you feel.

The Preacher is telling us here that life is a game of Catch Phrase. The clock is ticking, and at any moment the buzzer could go off and your life could be over. Death could come. And even if you don't

die, some random calamity could happen in this fallen world that could put the kibosh on whatever you are doing.

Chance Happens

11 Again I saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, or the battle to the strong, or bread to the wise, or riches to the discerning, or favor to the skillful; rather, time and chance happen to all of them.

Even if you are really strong, really smart, really skilled, and really wise – there are two game changers that will keep happening to you: **time and chance**.

Time

I don't know if you have ever thought of time as something that happens to you, but it really is. You cannot escape it. Something really wonderful is happening, and you just wish time would stop for a while so this moment wouldn't go away, but it always goes away. You see your kids growing up fast, and you want to hold on to this time, but the clock just never stops. The future keeps arriving every moment of the day, more of the future arrives, ready or not, and there is just no telling what it will bring. But you know one thing – it will bring change. And very often, change for the worse.

Chance

That is the other thing that happens to everyone - **chance** (speaking, of course, from the human perspective). There is no such thing as chance from God's perspective. Everything has meaning and purpose from His perspective, but from our point of view there are all kinds of things that happen that don't seem to have any rhyme or reason. If someone goes skiing in an avalanche area after a big storm and triggers an avalanche and is killed, we can connect the dots. That makes sense to us. But if a woman is walking in the park and a wheel comes off a semi on a nearby highway and bounces down into the park and hits her and kills her – that just seems so fluky random to us. And what the Preacher is saying here is that fluky, inexplicable, unpredictable things happen to everyone. They happen more often to fools than to wise people, but they still happen to everyone.

God is the author of life and in Him we live and move and have our being, and He gives us all kinds of gifts along the way – enjoy those gifts while you can because you never know when time and chance will pop up with some fluky thing that will bring that particular opportunity to an end. Even if you are the fastest runner, still run as fast as you can now because some unforeseen thing might happen in the second half of the race that will slow you down and the slow guy ends up beating you. And death can come at any moment.

12 For man certainly does not know his time: like fish caught in a cruel net or like birds caught in a trap, so people are trapped in an evil time as it suddenly falls on them.

So what are you involved with? Are you teaching a class right now? The clock is ticking, the buzzer could sound at any moment, you could get blindsided by something out of the blue that would make it so this next lesson might be the last thing you ever teach this group. So make it count! Do you have an opportunity to love your spouse right now? Get after it now before time and chance strike and the opportunity is gone. Are you in school? Don't say, "I hate school. Can't wait until I graduate." If school is where God has you right now then enjoy God's gifts right now in school.

God's gifts come down like rain drops, and it is pouring rain. All you have to do is look up and open your mouth. There are things in your life that can be enjoyed if you are willing, and part of enjoying those things involves throwing yourself into your task whole heartedly and with all your strength. It is impossible to enjoy the swimming pool by just sticking your toe in. To get the joy you have got to take the plunge. And if you keep hesitating, before you know it time and chance will strike and it will be too late.

Wisdom Unappreciated

And not only can death come, and not only can time and chance take things away, but sinful people can step in and foul things up. That is another part of the curse.

13 I have observed that this also is wisdom under the sun, and it is significant to me: 14 There was a small city with few men in it. A great king came against it, surrounded it, and built large siege works against it. 15 Now a poor wise man was found in the city, and he delivered the city by his wisdom. Yet no one remembered that poor man.

That is an interesting little parable. It is a principle Solomon learned way back when he was just a kid – 10 or 12 years old. There was a town in Israel called Abel that was about to be destroyed by Solomon's dad – King David. But at the last minute a very wise woman stepped forward and used her wisdom to head the whole thing off, and the battle never even took place. Joab was satisfied and just took his army and went back home without firing a shot. You can read it in 2 Samuel 20. I don't have time to go through the whole story, but I will say this. The thing that is interesting about that account is that we know the names of every single character involved except one. The account mentions David, Abishai, Joab, Sheba, the Kerethites, the Pelethites, Bicri, and Amasa. All those people are mentioned by name in the account, and some of them didn't even do anything. Like Amasa – all he does is get stabbed in the stomach by Joab. Or Bicri – he does not even appear in the story – he is just mentioned as the father of Sheba. But all the names of all the characters, major and minor, are remembered – except one. The woman whose wisdom saved the whole city. No one remembered her name.

And that is illustrative of the way things go in this life – wisdom is not appreciated. No one is famous in our culture for wisdom. Lots of people are famous for their strength. A boxer who can knock out any other boxer but who cannot form a coherent sentence will be paid millions of dollars and be remembered for decades to come. But of all the countless celebrities and heroes in our culture, which ones are famous for their great wisdom? We know who the strongest and fastest and richest and sexiest people in the world are, we know who the most educated people are, but have you ever seen a magazine article on the top ten wisest people in the world? It is just not something people value that much.

But they should, because wisdom is better than strength.

16 And I said, "Wisdom is better than strength, but the wisdom of the poor man is despised, and his words are not heeded."

Wisdom can save you in times when you are totally outgunned, outnumbered, overmatched. If you are distressed because you are not the one in charge – you don't have authority and power, then strive for wisdom. You are not the President or Governor, you are not the boss where you work, you are not in charge. Or maybe you are a wife, and you struggle with the idea of having to submit to your husband's authority. If you have anxiety over not being the one in charge, just remember this – wisdom will give you more influence than power and authority will.

Wisdom Spoiled

17 The calm words of the wise are heeded more than the shouts of a ruler over fools. 18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war

If you want to accomplish great things, you do not have to be the one in charge. All you have to do is gain wisdom. And when you do, you can be calm. You can almost always tell who is winning a debate by who is remaining calm. The one who starts raising his voice, and attacking his opponent, and resorting to insults, and all the rest – that is the one who is losing. When you are wiser than your opponent, you can just be calm and collected, because your case is stronger and speaks for itself.

Wisdom is incredibly powerful and valuable, but don't expect people to see value in it. Don't expect your wisdom to be celebrated or appreciated, or even remembered. We live in a fallen world, so don't be surprised when your wisdom goes unnoticed. And don't be surprised when the things you accomplish with your wisdom get ruined by fools. Just as he told us before, even wisdom can be derailed by sin.

9 ...but one sinner can destroy much good. 10:1 Dead flies make a perfumer's oil ferment and stink; so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

So really there are three things that happen that can ruin things. Time happens, chance happens, and fools happen. And all of them can bring your current opportunities to an end.

Conclusion: Beat the Buzzer

But for now, you're alive! Act like it! Seize the moment! *Carpe diem!* Take advantage of the opportunity before you right now. Live life to beat the buzzer. Enjoy your meals, and put on some party clothes. Get dressed up and put on perfume or cologne and go out and let there be plenty of celebration in your life. God has given you life – use it! Plunge yourself into relationships. Don't squander this opportunity to enjoy your wife - or your husband – or your parents, or your kids, or your friends because the clock is ticking. The buzzer could go off at any second. Have you let days go by without reconciling with someone? Weeks? Years? Do we think we are going to live forever? Time and chance are right around the corner, fools could strike at any moment. This opportunity will soon be lost. Don't waste years or weeks or hours.

And enjoy your God-given task. Do it with all your strength. Learn to enjoy the use of wisdom and knowledge and planning and working. We are imitating God when we do those things. It is part of the life God has given us. You're alive. Act like it!

Benediction: Psalm 20:1-5 May the LORD answer you when you are in distress; may the name of the God of Jacob protect you. 2 May he send you help from the sanctuary and grant you support from Zion. 4May he give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed. 5 May the LORD grant all your requests

Application Questions (James 1:25)

- 1) How would you describe your task in life at this time? What has God called you to do right now (at work, in the home, at church, etc.)?
- 2) Which parts of your calling are easiest to do wholeheartedly? And which are hardest?
- 3) How do you typically respond when unexpected, unexplainable hardship breaks into your life (time and chance happen to you)?