

Ecclesiastes 9: 7-9; “God’s Accepting Your Works”, A Bible Study prepared by Pastor Paul Rendall for the Evening of August 31st, 2011, and presented at the Rendall home.

The statement that we want to focus on this evening is found in the second part of verse 7: For God has already accepted your works,” This statement ought to really make us think. Solomon cannot be talking about an unbeliever when he says this. If you are an unbeliever, God has not “already accepted your works” in any sense. You can see what God’s evaluation of all people outside of Christ is, if you will turn over to Romans 3: 9-18. But more specifically in verse 18, the Apostle Paul says of unbelieving Jews and Gentiles both; that by nature, – “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” They do not have regard for God or His Word, by nature. The Scriptures are given to us to make us think; to make us think deeply; about ourselves and God. Are we accepted by God, as we are, in our sins, without conversion to Christ? Are our works accepted by Him? No, the Bible teaches us that we are only accepted in Christ; when we have faith in what Christ has done in His life and His death on our behalf. When are accepted by God in the Beloved; our Lord Jesus Christ, then all of our works are accepted as well. Ephesians 1: 5 – “Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.” And salvation; we read in Ephesians 2: 8 and 9 says, is only “by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves; not of our works, lest any should boast.” It is the gift of God. Solomon came to know, even if he did not know these verses, still came to understand in his time; in the Old Testament time; that God does accept the works of the one who is trusting him. So this evening we want to think about what we should do; how we should live, as believers, since God has already accepted our works, because of Jesus Christ our Lord. Here in verses 7 and 8 we find Solomon urging the believer in God to keep these two instructions of wisdom because his works are already accepted in God’s sight. First, he instructs the believer to be joyful and to have a merry heart. Second, he instructs the believer to let themselves always wear white and their head to lack no oil.

1st – Solomon urges the believer in Himself to be joyful and to have a merry heart.

Verse 7 – “Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already accepted your works.” You will notice that in these 2 verses that it is in regard to use of physical and material things that Solomon gives this instruction. To have true and lasting joy in this life, as well as the next, however; you must know that God will accept your works. The simple joys of eating and drinking are tied even to these. Eating not only sustains the strength of the physical body, but joy comes to the soul and the spirit of a person who eats, knowing that God accepts his works. I think that for unbelievers; that they see

eating as a reward for their works. This is what I deserve, having worked hard; to eat. Sometimes people reward themselves continually in this way, and have physical or emotional troubles in relation to their eating because they are not trusting in God or keeping His commandments. And so they do not know the true joy that comes from knowing God. When you know the Lord you do not need to look to the food itself to be your real strength, or to give you real joy; or the wine to give you a merry heart. You have the favor and approval of the One who gives you all things richly to enjoy. Turn with me over 1 Timothy 6: 17. “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who give us richly all things to enjoy.” You can see that the trouble with the rich person, whether he is an unbeliever or not is that he may be trusting in the uncertainty of riches. If that is the case he may become proud and self-sufficient because of his riches, and so as we shall see in a moment, he is not able to eat his bread with joy. Turn with me over to Ecclesiastes 5, verse 12. “The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep.” The NAS is even clearer here. “The sleep of the working man is pleasant, whether he eats little or much.” “But the full stomach of the rich man does not allow him to sleep.” Now what is the problem here? The problem is that even though the rich man has an abundance of food; and even though he might have an earthly joy in the eating of it; that that is all that he has. If he is an unbelieving rich man, he does not pray before his meal, and he does not have the Lord’s grace working in his heart, and so he may feel that he has to overeat to really be satisfied with the food. Having more, he thinks, is the answer to everything. But then later, he finds that it is not. And because having true joy and true satisfaction only comes from the Lord’s blessing upon what you eat and drink. But when you are in favor with the Lord, and you are giving thanks for your food and the joy of having grace in your heart; then you are truly rich.

Look over at 1 Timothy 4: 1, and you will see that the same thing is true in terms of abstaining from food because you believe it is religious to do so, and you are involved in a false religion. “Now the Spirit expressly says that in the latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.” “For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.” You can see here that those who falsely believe that they have to abstain from certain foods in order to supposedly be more spiritual, are clearly robbing themselves of the real joy that they could have if they would simply believe that God has created these things to be received. Every creature; every meat or food which God has declared to be clean is clean, and nothing is to be refused except for conscience sake. In the Old Testament there were clean and unclean foods and

animals that were listed in the law. Those were not supposed to be eaten. But when Christ came, knowing (without any pride) that He would fulfill the law through His being pure and clean Himself in His heart and mind and actions, He declared that all foods were clean. He laid down this principle which is found in Mark Chapter 7, and verse 18 – “So He said to them, ‘Are you without understanding also?’ “Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?” Or in the NAS – “Thus He declared all foods clean.” Who can have true joy, wondering if they are eating clean or unclean food? But if the Lord has declared it clean, then true joy abounds in the simplest of things, like eating food. Turn to Matthew 4, verse 4 – Jesus was being tempted by the devil to command the stones to become bread so that he could prove to Satan that he was the Son of God. Jesus did no such thing. He did not need to prove anything to Satan, except His holy resolution by the power of the Holy Spirit, to keep all of God’s commandments, so he said to the devil – “Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” You see; He knew that what brings true joy and real strength is spiritually feeding upon God’s blessed Word, and learning to do God’s will. “I have food that you know nothing of,” He says in John 4: 32. And in verse 34 He says, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.”

The same holds true for drinking wine. The drinking of wine is condemned by the Bible if it is done to excess or leads to drunkenness. But turn with me to Psalm 104: 14 to see its good use. “God causes the grass to grow for the cattle, and vegetation for the service of man, that he may bring forth food from the earth, and wine that makes glad the heart of man.” John Gill says, “Does nature go further, and covet something pleasant? Here is *wine, that makes glad the heart*, refreshes the spirits, and exhilarates them, when it is soberly and moderately used, that we may not only go through our business, but go through it cheerfully.” “It is a pity that that (good use) should be abused to overcharge the heart, and unfit men for their duty, which was given to revive their heart and quicken them in their duty.” Some people drink wine so that they will become merry; perhaps even become drunk by it, in order to satisfy themselves. But notice how it is worded here in Ecclesiastes: “And drink your wine with a merry heart.” In the heart of a righteous man, it is the grace and favor of God that has truly caused him have a merry heart. The wine did not bring this righteous merriment. It was God accepting his works. **2ndly – Let’s look at Solomon’s command to let yourself always wear white and your head lack no oil.**

“Let your garments always be white, and let your head lack no oil.” This first phrase means that you ought to let yourself wear the garments that indicate that you know what God has done for you in giving you grace and accepting all your works. White, not black, was the appropriate color of those garments in Old Testament times. Black was the color of mourning. White was the color of

happiness and rejoicing in connection with the Old Testament priest's sanctifying themselves. Look at 2 Chronicles 5, verse 11. "And it came to pass when the priests came out of the Most Holy Place (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without keeping to their divisions), and the Levites who were the singers, all those of Asaph and Heman and Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, stood at the east end of the altar, clothed in white linen, having cymbals, stringed instruments and harps, and with them one hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets—indeed it came to pass, when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord, and when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord saying 'For He is good, for His mercy endures forever, that the house the house of the Lord was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God.'" This happened at the dedication of the temple; a very special event in Israel's history. And yet, here in our text, we find that our garments ought always to be white. I think that he is speaking spiritually. He is saying that if God has already accepted your works, that this is what you ought to always see yourself wearing. Not white physical clothes, but the white robes of righteousness, because you are thankful for what He has done for you, and you desire to be always praising Him and thanking Him for His goodness. We are always to be joyful in His presence for the greatness of His grace towards us in Christ. Philippians Chapter 4, and verse 4 – "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice!"

This is also related to what the next words mean in verse 8, "And let your head lack no oil." The oil, when used for anointing the tired or weary or hurting body of a person, in those times is that which would refresh them, and comfort them, and help them in the healing process if they were wounded. The Good Samaritan poured oil into the wounds of the man who had been beaten and robbed. If we are fasting, we are told by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 6, verse 7, we are to anoint our head with oil so that men will not know that we are fasting. Oil refreshes in this sense. Spiritually oil is also the symbol of God's help and presence. We ought to be praying for more of the Holy Spirit's help and presence with us, every day. It is Christ my Shepherd who "anoints my head with oil"; who gives me a spirit of joy and rejoicing, knowing that my works are already accepted; those things that I am attempting to do for Him, and for His glory. These are conscious actions which are taken here. God has saved us and justified us, through Jesus Christ our Lord, and now our response every day ought to be to praise Him and to rejoice. Let there not be a melancholy spirit which prevails in your heart. Let us turn to Psalm 40, verse 16, and you will find the attitude which you as a Christian ought to have. "Let all who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; Let such as love your salvation say continually, "The Lord be magnified!"

A good example of this teaching that we are looking at tonight is Ruth and Boaz in the book of Ruth Chapter 3, verse 1. Ruth knew how to use the oil, and Boaz did not need wine at all to have a merry heart. “Then Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, ‘My daughter, shall I not seek security for you, that may be well with you?’” “Now Boaz, whose young women you were with, is he not our relative?” “In fact, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor.” “Therefore wash yourself, and anoint yourself (the very subject of our study here), put on your best garment (white?) and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.” “Then it shall be when he lies down, that you shall notice the place where he lies; and you shall go in, uncover his feet, and lie down; and he will tell you what you should do.” “So she went down to the threshing floor and did according to all that her mother-in-law instructed her.” “And after Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was cheerful, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain; and she came softly, uncovered his feet, and lay down.” Notice that Ruth carefully prepared herself to see how she could be accepted by Boaz in this most important of encounters for her; in regard to her presenting herself in a favorable way to the one who could possibly take upon himself to become her kinsman-redeemer. God had already accepted her works and gone before her, but that did not stop her from presenting herself to Boaz in the very best, thoughtful, and winsome way possible. This you should do for your King Jesus. And, this you should do for your husband if you are married. Study to be pleasing to the Christ who has, and who will, redeemed your life from all distress. Now notice also, that after Boaz ate and drank, that his heart was cheerful. Why was his heart cheerful? Because his works were accepted by God. He knew (again; without pride) that he was walking closely with his God. Do you have this kind of joy? You certainly can come to have real joy; even just sitting down at the table and eating and drinking; when you know that God accepts your works. The greatest work that you can do is to do your works to the glory of God. John 3: 21 – “But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God.”