

WEEK 13: December 3, 2017	Ecclesiastes 8:16-9:9	HARD LABOR
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INITIAL OBSERVATION: What word is found in Ecclesiastes 8:16 and 9:9? [LABOR](#)

QUESTION: WHERE SHOULD OUR QUEST FOR MEANING LEAD US?

WISDOM DOES NOT REMOVE LIFE'S [MYSTERY](#)

ECCLESIASTES 8:16–17, ¹⁶ *When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe man's **labor** on earth—his eyes not seeing sleep day or night—¹⁷ then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all his efforts to search it out, man cannot discover its meaning. Even if a wise man claims he knows, he cannot really comprehend it.*

1 Corinthians 2:6–10, ⁶ We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷ No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him" — ¹⁰ but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.

WE ARE IN GOD'S [HANDS](#)

ECCLESIASTES 9:1, *So I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do are in God's hands, but no man knows whether love or hate awaits him.*

- **Refrain from drawing hasty conclusions:** (cf. Ecclesiastes 6:1-6; 7:1-15)
- **Remember God's promises**

2 Timothy 2:19, Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."

Romans 8:31–37, ³¹ What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? . . . ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." ³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

HUMANITY SHARES A COMMON DESTINY

ECCLESIASTES 9:2-3, ² All share a common destiny—the righteous and the wicked, the good and the bad, the clean and the unclean, those who offer sacrifices and those who do not. As it is with the good man, so with the sinner; as it is with those who take oaths, so with those who are afraid to take them. ³ This is the evil in everything that happens under the sun: The same destiny overtakes all. The hearts of men, moreover, are full of evil and there is madness [*foolishness*] in their hearts while they live, and afterward they join the dead.

- **Our mortality**
- **Our fallen nature**

WE HAVE A LIVING HOPE

ECCLESIASTES 9:4-6, ⁴ Anyone who is among the living has hope—even a live dog is better off than a dead lion! ⁵ For **the living know that they will die**, but **the dead know nothing**; they have no further reward, and even the memory of them is forgotten. ⁶ Their love, their hate and their jealousy [*rivalry*] have long since vanished; never again will they have a part in anything that happens under the sun.

- **Hope of preparing to meet God**
- **Hope of living significantly** (1 Corinthians 15:56-58)
1 Corinthians 15:56–58, 56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 58 Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

LIVE LIFE PLEASING TO GOD

ECCLESIASTES 9:7-9, ⁷ **Go**, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for it is now [*already*] that **God favors what you do**. ⁸ Always be clothed in white, and always anoint your head with oil. ⁹ Enjoy [*see*] life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless [*puzzling*] life that God has given you under the sun— all your meaningless [*puzzling*] days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun.

- **Seize the day**
- **God is for you**

Where should our quest for meaning lead us? To embrace life's uncertainties as we live for God's glory.

For further study . . .

1. Review 1 Corinthians 2. How dependent are we on God to reveal His will? To illumine our understanding? To inspire the writers of Scripture?
2. Read Romans 8:31-39. How do you reconcile the love and strength of God in our lives with the assault this world often brings upon His followers?
3. In our labor “under the sun” we can find ourselves bitter, unhappy, and miserable. Solomon has presented an argument, without minimizing life’s challenges, to help us in our quest for meaning. Review the notes and challenge yourself to see your life through this lens of faith.