Ecclesiastes 9:1-10 (NKJV)

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.

INTRODUCTION

The epitaph on the tombstone read:

Pause stranger when you pass by,
As you are now, so once was I.
As I am now, so you will be,
So prepare for death and follow me.

And underneath that epitaph someone had scratched:

To follow you I'm not content,
Until I know which way you went.

One day, unless the Lord comes first, everyone of us will die. We don't like to think about that, nor do we like to talk about it, but the Bible tells us it is true. "For it is appointed unto man once to die, and then to face the judgment."

In this ninth chapter of Ecclesiastes Solomon tackles this tough subject of death head-on. In our text, Solomon provides us with two important reminders that will help us to make the most out of our few days here on earth.
First of all, Solomon reminds us......

I. Death Is **CERTAIN** (vs. 1-6)

1. Notice what Solomon says in **verse 2**......

   v.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.

2. What Solomon is saying is “death is the Great Equalizer.” “Death plays no favorites.” “Death is not a respecter of persons.” “Death overlooks no one.”

3. Regardless of whether you are rich or poor......strong or weak......educated or uneducated......famous or obscure......good or bad........righteous or unrighteous........Christain or non-Christian........DEATH IS A CERTAINTY TO ALL MEN.

4. Regardless of whether you **work out** or you are a **couch potato**......regardless of whether you **take vitamins** or don't take vitamins........regardless of whether you **eat organic health foods** or **junk food**........DEATH IS STILL A CERTAINTY FOR ALL OF US.
5. Regardless of whether you have good genes or bad genes ... regardless if cancer or heart disease runs in your family or it doesn't......DEATH IS STILL A CERTAINTY FOR ALL OF US.

6. Now certainly there are things you and I can do to help prolong death, but there is nothing you and I can do to prevent death. The only way to get rid of DEATH is to get rid of SIN. And that is why JESUS came here to die for our sins. He came to die so that you and I might live for all eternity. You see while all men have the same destiny (the grave) not all men have the same eternity.

7. In verses 4, 5 Solomon reminds us that even though death is a certainty, it is still good to be alive.

   v. 4 But for him who is joined to all the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion.

   v. 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.

8. What Solomon is saying is “as long as you still have breath in your body” there is hope. There is still the opportunity to embrace life and live it for all its worth while it lasts!
Those who have already died can't do that. Their time has passed. Their days on earth have expired. They can’t come back and relive their days. They can't come back and do all the things they wanted to do while they were alive. They don’t get “another crack” at life in this world.

9. Solomon uses an interesting little parable to explain this truth in verse 4.

v.4b “A living dog is better than a dead lion.”

The lion is the most noble of beasts. This was especially true in biblical times when the LION served as the royal insignia of the House of King David. Even Christ Himself is called in the scriptures, “The Lion of the Tribe of Judah.” (Revelation 5:5)

By contrast, few animals were more despised in the scriptures than DOGS. In biblical times dogs were not the pampered, beautiful, animals like our domesticated pets of today. Dogs were dirty animals that roamed the streets scavenging for food.
Now even the most ardent dog-lovers would agree that dogs are no comparison to lions. When parents take their kids to the ZOO, it is very doubtful the first thing the kids want to see is the hyena.....jackal.....and coyote exhibits. No, chances are one of the very first things they will want to see are THE LIONS, “the king of the beasts.”

But if you put a dead lion next to a live dog which one is better off? The live dog, right?

10. That is precisely the point Solomon is making. Living is better than dying. Your life may be very difficult. Your life may be full of trials and challenges, but at least from a human perspective, life above ground is better than lying lifeless six feet under ground.

Now here’s the second truth Solomon reminds us of......
II. Life is **UNCERTAIN**  (vs. 7-10)

1. Death has a way of bringing perspective to life.

   The late Charles Haddon Spurgeon used to say: *"The sight of a funeral is a very beautiful thing for the soul."*

   Columba Stewart said: *"Awareness of our mortality exerts a unique power to focus the mind and heart on the essentials."*

   *(ECCLESIASTES: WHY EVERYTHING MATTERS by Philip Graham Ryken, Crossway Publishers,)*

2. Essentially what Solomon is saying to us in **verses 7-10** is if we knew the day we were going to die, it would change how we live the rest of our lives.

   That's true, isn't it? If you and I knew the exact day we were going to die, we would be very careful how we lived the rest of our lives, wouldn't we?

   - We would **love our mate, and our children, and our loved ones more intensely.**

   - We would **spend our money more wisely.**

   - We would **plan our days more carefully.**

   - We would **do our work more purposefully.**
- We would live life more passionately.

- And most importantly, we would worship and serve GOD more faithfully.

3. If we lived with the end in mind I believe each and everyone of us would do everything we could to “milk as much out of each and every day” as we possibly could. We would appreciate each day, each hour, and each moment even more. We would cherish every birthday, every anniversary, and every holiday even more.

If we would live life that differently, wouldn't we be wise to LIVE EACH AND EVERY DAY LIKE WE'RE DYING?

4. In verses 7-10 Solomon gives us some practical wisdom on how we can live life to the fullest while we are here.

(A) First he tells us to TAKE TIME TO ENJOY LIFE. (v.7)

v. 7 Go eat bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart; for God has already accepted your works.

Some have misinterpreted this verse to mean that life is short and we should “party hard” while we are here. Go out and gorge yourself on food and alcohol. But that is not what Solomon is saying.
When Solomon says, “Go, eat your bread with joy and
drink your wine with a merry heart” he is saying, “Take
time to smell the roses.” “Seize the day.”

Brothers and sisters, the LORD doesn't want us to be so preoccupied with DEATH and the daily cares of life that we don't take the time to enjoy each and every day He blesses us with.

(B) Take time to enjoy FAMILY. (v. 9)

v.9 Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun.

It is interesting to note that these words were written by a man who had 700 wives and 300 concubines. Solomon had “many honeys” and “many honeymoons.” But notice he speaks in the singular. He says, “Live joyfully with the WIFE whom you love.” Its as though now that Solomon is moving towards the twilight years of his life, he longs for those precious days when he married his first wife. Its as though he now wishes he had enjoyed a long, satisfying life with one woman instead of a thousand.

This ought to send a powerful message to each married couple here!
Listen closely all you husbands and wives. DEATH is a certainty, and each and every day we live is bringing us closer and closer to that day when death will separate us from our mate. You may go first, or your mate may go before you, but the clock is ticking, and each of us is moving closer and closer to that day when we will say goodbye to our mate.

Have you ever noticed the intense love between a husband and wife when they learn that one of them is going to die shortly? Things like spending time with each other, and talking with each other, and lying next to each other becomes more precious than gold. Each hug, each kiss, each holding of the hands becomes more intense, because the time is drawing near when they will never be able to do those things again.

If we enjoyed our mate as though each day would be our last, our marriages would be so rich and rewarding.

If tomorrow never comes, Will she know how much I loved her Did I try in every way to show her every day, that she's my only one And if my time on earth were through, And she must face the world without me, Is the love I gave her in the past, going to be enough to last, If tomorrow never comes.  

(lyrics by Garth Brooks)
(C) Take time to enjoy your WORK (v.10)

v.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.

Basically what Solomon is saying is “Don't die before you're dead.” Continue to be productive! Continue to make a difference in the lives of others. Take advantage of the opportunities God gives to you to make a difference in the lives of others.

DON'T PUT YOURSELF ON THE SHELF JUST TO COLLECT DUST THE REST OF YOUR LIFE.

CONCLUSION

A bank in Binghamton, New York had some flowers sent to a competitor who had recently moved into a new building. But somehow there was a mix up at the florist, and the card that was sent with the floral arrangement read: “With Our Deepest Sympathy.” Upon realizing her mistake, the embarrassed florist called the bank president to apologize.

But what was even more embarrassing was when she realized the card that was supposed to have been on the flowers sent to the new bank, was on a flower arrangement that went to the local funeral home in honor of a deceased person, and that card read: “Congratulations on your new location.” One day you and I are going to die and move to a new location. But until then let us enjoy each and every precious day the Lord gives us in this world. Let us live like we were dying!