

Solomon's Twelve Secrets

Session 9: For Those Days When You Feel Disappointed With God

Edited Transcript

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Okay. Good morning, men. Please turn in your Bibles to Ecclesiastes chapter nine, Ecclesiastes chapter nine. And we're going to do something a little different today. And it's the beginning of a new tradition. We're going to be doing two shout outs each week. The first shout out we're going to do today is going to be what we've been doing for the last nine or 10 years. Each week, for those of you who are with us online, or streaming, or however you're doing it, we do a shout out to those of you who are doing the Bible study with us in a group. And today, the shout out goes to a group called "MIM". What do you think MIM stands for? Okay. This is a new group, 12 men, Wednesday mornings, 7:30 at the Riddle Open Bible Christian Center. And Don Causey in Riddle, Oregon, says that we mentor men to love Jesus and live out their lives daily by teaching the love of Jesus Christ. And so I wonder if you would join me in giving a very warm, rousing welcome to MIM. One, two, three, hoo, rah. Welcome, men. We're honored to have you as part of our group.

And the second shout out that we're going to begin doing, Man in the Mirror now has 81 area directors. And I think we're trying to add 50 next year. We're in a real hiring phase. And it dawned on me, we should be doing shout outs to our area directors. And so what better area director to begin with than our very own local area director, **Pat Leupold**. So today, we want to give a shout out to Pat Leupold, serving Central Florida. And there's his contact information if you're interested or need it. ADs, area directors, help churches disciple men more effectively. That's the mission. And Pat says, "Through 35 years of working with fathers in Christian schools," Christian school principal, "God developed a passion in me to see men grow, serve, and lead as Godly men."

And so I wonder if you would join me in giving a very warm, rousing Man in the Mirror congratulatory welcome to Pat Leupold, our area director. One, two, three, hoo rah. Awesome. And then each week, we're going to add an area director from somewhere around the country. For example, we have an area director in Oregon, where we just did the previous shout out. Maybe we'll do him. We'll do him.

And then the series, The Solomon's 12 Secrets. Today the title of the message, "For Those Days When You Feel Disappointed With God". We all want the same things. We want to know. We're all asking the same questions. We want to know if our lives are going to be meaningful. We want to know if we're going to find a job that we can enjoy. If we're married, we want to know if we're going to have a marriage that lasts. We want to know if we're going to have a good relationship. If we have children, we want to know if their lives are going to turn out well. We want to know when they are grown, if we're going to have a good relationship with them.

We want to know if we're going to be able to retire comfortably. We want to know if we're going to be happy at the end. We want to know if we're going to be able to finish well, and all of these kinds of

questions. The reason that you are here is because we are all alike in this. We are all in this together. We all are seeking the same things. We might have different ways of saying it, but generally speaking, we're all basically after the same things. And so we wouldn't have to ask those questions though, if life was easy, because it's not. There we are, standing around, minding our own business. And all of a sudden, life happens. And so we end up feeling like we don't have control of what's going on. And it's a terrible feeling to not have a sense of where your life is going, that you don't have any control.

PROBLEM: LIFE IS UNFAIR, UNPREDICTABLE, AND FATAL

It's those kinds of feelings that has led Solomon now to write some of the thoughts that he has here in chapter nine of Ecclesiastes. And so let me go ahead and give you the problem. The problem is life is unfair, unpredictable, and fatal. But God is good. I mean, you can say it in other ways, but I don't think you can say it any better than this. Is this not the problem, not only for the nonbeliever, but for the believer too, that life is unfair? Life is unpredictable. Life is fatal. And then we are taught that God is good. Solomon in chapter nine has basically put together a sandwich. And so we're going to look at the bottom slice of bread first, then the top slice of bread. Then we'll look at the meat.

Let's begin with the first point that he makes in verse 11. Life isn't fair. Your present life isn't fair. Verse 11. You know what, I think I'm going to switch to NIV, the new NIV. I've been using NIV 1984 because it's the Bible that my children and wife gave me when we started this Bible study. But I'm going to start using the revised version of the NIV, and only have it in digital. Verse 11. I have seen something else under the sun. The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong. Life is unfair. Nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant, or favor to the learned. Life is not fair. But time and chance happen to them all because life is not fair. Moreover, no one knows when their hour will come. Our beloved former administrator, Jim Seibert, told me one day that when his brother-in-law was 47 years of age with four kids, he just dropped dead. He just dropped dead.

And what was particularly poignant to me as somebody who works with men is the fact that really his only claim to fame was is that he worked every holiday and every weekend, and so he was never home. And then at 47, he drops dead. Moreover, no one knows when their hour will come. Life isn't fair. As fish are caught in a cruel net, or birds are taken in a snare, so people are trapped by evil times, life isn't fair, that fall unexpectedly on them. And then he tells this story about a city, a small city with a few people. And a king comes and surrounds it. And there's a young man in the city who doesn't have anything, but he's wise. And he saves the city. And it says, verse 15, "But nobody remembers that poor man. Life isn't fair." Verse 16. So I said, "Wisdom's better than strength, but the poor man's wisdom is despised because life is not fair. And his words are no longer heeded because life is not fair. The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouts of a ruler of fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war. But one sinner destroys much good." Why? Because life is not fair.

All right. That's the bottom slice of bread. Now let's look at the top slice of bread, verse one. Life is unpredictable. If your present life is not fair, your future life is unpredictable. Verse one. I reflected on all this and concluded that the righteous and the wise, and what they do are in God's hands. But no one knows whether love or hate awaits them, so there is this idea of unpredictability. The saving grace of this unpredictability is the first part of this verse that Solomon is able to conclude that whether righteous or wise, what they do, what you do is in God's hands. And again, for the third time in this series, I'm going to say it. If my times are not in God's hands, if the world is not in God's hands, then tomorrow I'm hooking up my trailer, and I'm moving on. I'm just out of here. I'm checking out.

Life is unpredictable. One of our former members, Mark, told me a story that one day he was watching a special needs children television special with his wife. A little bit later, they went on a walk together. And he said to his wife, "You know, we could handle that. We could handle that." And then two years later they had a child, special needs. Life is unpredictable. But our times are in God's hands, and God is good. And He uses all things together for good in ways we don't understand. But two years later, Mark became a Christian because God had given them the gift of a special needs child. Life is unpredictable. Life is unfair. Life is unpredictable. Your present's unfair. Your future's unpredictable. And your end is fatal. Life is fatal.

Reading on, verse two through verse six, 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 don't. As it is with the good, so with the sinful. As it is with those who take oaths, so with those who are afraid to take them. Everybody dies. This is the evil, and everything that happens under the sun, the same destiny overtakes them all. The hearts of people moreover are full of evil, and there's badness in their hearts while they live. And afterward, they join the dead. All share a common destiny, they join the dead, if you want to just compress that down.

Anyone who is among the living has hope, even a live dog is better than a dead lion, for the living know that they will die. But the dead know nothing. They have no further reward. And even their name is forgotten. By the way, scripture is all true all the time. But you have to understand when it is prescribing a scriptural truth and when it is just simply reflecting a conversation, or when it is reflecting human thoughts. A lot of things Solomon says, he really said them. They're really true. They're really in the Bible. But they really reflect the errors. Some of these things reflect the errors in human thinking, the inefficiency of the human mind, the sin, the infestation of sin, our inability to construct correct narratives.

When we read this, these are principles. This Ecclesiastes is called wisdom literature. It's not receptive. It's not like the words of Jesus, where every single thing is the final word. A lot of things that Solomon says are meant to ... It is the word of God, but God has it in here to stir us up, to get us thinking. For example, it says here, "They have no further reward, and even their name is forgotten." That would lead some people to question whether or not there would be life after death. Right? But that's not the intention of this kind of literature at all. By the way, everything I just said, I hadn't thought about in advance, so I hope it's right.

Or it could be fatal. Yep. The problem is here is that life is unfair, unpredictable, and fatal. But God is good. And when these things happen to men, as a result of these things happening to men, many men become paralyzed with fear. And they withdraw. They act out. They lash out. They anesthetize their pain. They blame God. And so these scriptures really would be a problem for us if God had promised in His word that life would be fair, life would be predictable, and you would be able to find somewhere near Saint Augustine, a fountain of youth, Ponce de Leon. But the Bible does not declare that life is fair and predictable. What the Bible declares is that because of the fall, God has made the creation in such a way that it draws men to Jesus Christ. God has made the creation in such a way that it draws men to Jesus Christ. You've heard me say it here many times. Suffering compels us to seek the God that success makes you think we don't need. How many times have I said that here?

Two? Okay. I thought I said it more than that. Whatever. Maybe you just weren't here the other times. And so what is the truth that helps us understand this problem, why men act out, why men lash out, why men blame God? And it's the Big Idea today, taken from this chapter in its totality. And the Big Idea

today is this. **Most men only know enough about God to be disappointed with him.** Most men, they only know enough about God to be disappointed. Life is unfair. Life is unpredictable. Life is even fatal. But God is good. That doesn't make any sense. And so I'm going to anesthetize my pain. I'm going to blame God for what's going on in my life. I'm going to lash out at those people around me, especially those Christian Jesus freak weirdos that go to that Man in the Mirror Bible study on Friday mornings. I wouldn't go within a mile of that place on Friday. I ordinarily have to go by the civic center to get to my job, but not today. It's Friday. I'm going the other way. I'm going to drive three blocks out of my way just so I don't have to get near those Jesus freaks because they say that God is good. How could God be good? Jeez. Give me a break. That's a man who only knows enough about God to be disappointed with him. You with me?

SOLUTION: KNOWING ENOUGH ABOUT GOD TO NOT BLAME HIM

All right. And so the solution, what's the solution? Well, it's easy. We solve this problem by knowing enough about God to not be blaming Him for everything. That's what this Bible study's been about for now 33 years. Let me just spend the rest of our time together telling you everything that I've taught you already over these 33 years about God, so that you won't blame Him. Or you can just remember it on your own. But I think in verse one, it all gets summed up. It all gets summed up.

I reflected on all this, all these 33 years, and concluded this. I conclude the same thing. You do too. If you've been walking with the Lord for any amount of time, this would be your conclusion. I reflected on all this, and concluded that the righteous and the wise and what they do is in God's hands. We've already seen this several times in Solomon. Chapter seven, verse 14, second part, therefore a man cannot discover anything about his future. Eight, one. Who knows the explanation of things? Verse seven of chapter eight. Since no man knows the future, who can tell him what is to come? The last verse in chapter eight, no one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all of his efforts to search it out, no man can discover its meaning.

There's a mystery. There's a mystery. For me, I believe that the solution for knowing enough about God to not blame Him for what is unfair, unpredictable, and even fatal. It's to understand the character of God. It's to understand the character of God. It's to study the character and attributes of God, which is by the way, what we do. We have a threefold concept here at this Bible study. Each week, we're trying to do three things. Number one, to help you see a little larger glimpse of this God who is. Secondly, we're inviting you to jettison a little piece of the God or the Gods you have wanted. And then third, because it is application oriented. We're trying to help you connect the dots between what's going on in the Bible. And it's 9:00. The phones are ringing. The customers are complaining. How do you connect those dots? How do you make that transition? Can you connect the dots? That's what we're trying to do here.

We're studying the character and the attributes of God so that we can see how that applies to the unfair and unpredictable and fatal things that are going on, and still be able to say that God is good. One of my prayers, I have these set prayers, then I change them up over the years. But these five have ... Maybe it's like ... You know how all cars seem to over the years look more and more alike? Well, a lot of that has to do with the study of aerodynamics. Right? There would be one ideal car ultimately. Right? And so all cars are ... Not all cars, because some cars are boxy. Right? But many cars are seeking to get to that ultimate perfect design of perfect aerodynamics. I'm doing that with my prayers. I'm not there yet. But they're getting better over the years.

One of my prayers is this. I've mentioned it here before. I know because Bob back here asked me for it, and I sent it to him. One of my prayers is that Lord, you alone ... And this has to do with the character and attributes of God, which is I'm mentioning it now. Lord, you alone are worthy. You alone are worthy to receive worship, glory, honor, power, majesty, dominion, authority, strength, wisdom, wealth, repentance, faith, hope, love, adoration, affection, adulation, admiration, awe, reverence, holiness, obedience, service, sacrifice, surrender, blessing, thanksgiving. And the reason that I am able to pray this way to God is because I have studied the attributes and character of God. The solution to knowing enough about God not to blame Him is to study the character and the attributes of God.

And when we do this, we over time increasingly, it's a process, but we increasingly come to this place where we believe that God really is good, and that He really is worthy to receive all of these things I've just mentioned. I can pray those things in earnest because I know enough about Him that I don't blame Him anymore. Of course, the problem today here we're talking about is that most men only know enough about God to be disappointed with him, a great reason to be at Bible study like this, to be in the word for yourself, to be involved and an active participant in the local church. And then to tie it off here this morning with an application, the meat in the sandwich, we've looked at the two slices of bread. In the middle of this chapter, there are these goods. And the application is to know God's four goods that make your life worthwhile.

APPLICATION: "KNOW" GOD'S 4 "GOODS" THAT MAKE YOUR LIFE WORTHWHILE

What is the task that Solomon undertook in writing Ecclesiastes? We know it from chapters one and two. What does he say? He says, in chapter one he says, "I devoted myself to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under in Heaven. And why did I do that?" Chapter two, I wanted to see what was worthwhile for men to do under Heaven during the few days of their lives. And so he's given us these four goods that make our lives worthwhile. Here's what they are. It's verses seven through 10. It's going to take me a while to get used to using the digital Bible because I've got all these notes I've scribbled in this other Bible. But seven, eight, nine, and ten.

Verse seven is enjoy your life. Verse eight is lead a holy life. Verse nine is enjoy your wife if you're married. And then verse ten is enjoy your work. Let's look at them. Verse seven, enjoy your life. Go. Eat your food with gladness and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do. So God is in this. God is in this, wanting you to enjoy your life. God is good. We want to know more about God, His character, his attributes, knowing what these goods are that He's given us. There's a way we can apply this chapter. And then verse eight, always be clothed in white and always anoint your head with oil. Well, that's just an Old Testament way of saying lead a holy life. Lead a life that is set apart.

In the New Testament, it says if you're hanging out with somebody and they start telling all these coarse, crude jokes, walk away. Don't participate, things like that. Lead a holy ... Holy means set apart. Lead a holy life. Verse nine, enjoy life with your wife, whom you love all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun. God gave us this life, all your meaningless days, for this is your lot in life. And then you toil some labor under the sun, so enjoy your wife. You know. And then verse 10, which by the way, is going to be the ... This is the theme verse for our next series. The next series that we're going to do is called Do Something Great With Your Life. And it's going to start in January after we finish this series.

Whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead where you're going, there is neither working, nor planning, nor knowledge, nor wisdom. Don't get hung up on that. I

certainly have been, but that doesn't mean you have to be. Just look at the first part of this verse. Whatever your hands find to do, do it with all your might. Enjoy your work. So enjoy your life, lead a holy life. Enjoy your wife. Enjoy your work. These are four goods that God has given us against the backdrop of life being unfair, unpredictable, and fatal, these are four ways that he's good to us.

How many of you are familiar with the name Alan Jackson? How many country western fans do we have here? Every country western fan, raise your hand. And any country western fan that has his hand raised right now that doesn't know Alan Jackson, stand up and be ridiculed. Alan Jackson is one of the ... And by the way, I know nothing about country western music, so I'm probably going to speak in a way that is riddled with error. But it's the big picture that counts in the story I'm about to tell you. Alan Jackson is one of the 10 top selling single artists of all time across all genre of music. He's a very, very big deal. Two time Grammy winner, I could read you his resume, 16, 18 CMA Awards, whatever it is. 60 million albums he's sold worldwide. He's a superstar. He's a megastar.

Alan Jones grew up in Newman, Georgia in a house with a dirt floor. He met Denise when she was 17 years old. They got married. He had this dream of singing country western music. In a chance meeting with Glen Campbell, Denise, his wife, got to advice to move to Nashville, which they did. And then sometime in the early 1990s, around 1990, he got his break. And in the early 1990s, he became a star, a big star. He moved on to a 300 acre estate and a 31,000 square foot home. And as Alan Jones told my friend Robert, as I stood there and I surveyed all that I had, I still wasn't happy. So I added a jet. I added 25 cars. I added a 125 foot boat. And then I left my wife. God has created the world in such a way that it is impossible to find meaning in money, accomplishments, and possessions. This is the way that God has created the world. A lot of men, when they think of life being unfair, unpredictable, and fatal, they're thinking about their money, their accomplishments.

And the fact is that because God is good, He is ... We've said this throughout the series, apart from God, life has no meaning. The problem with money is that money ... Is that men think that money will do what it want, and that God won't do what He will. We've been over these in earlier chapters. Alan Jones, when he would drop by the estate to pick up a change of clothes or a change of cars, he would have conversations with his wife, Denise. Meanwhile, Denise had come to the conclusion that she needed to get back to her spiritual roots. And as Alan would come by, they would have these brief conversations. But he began to see these changes taking place in his wife, and their conversations became longer. Until finally, he decided that whatever it is that she had, he wanted it too. And so they got back together, renewed their marriage vows. And by the way, raised a beautiful family.

And he said to my friend, Robert, I'm going to read it to make sure I get it right. Robert, I am so committed to making this marriage work, I want a whole marriage. And I would be willing to move back into that double wide to make this marriage work. Here's a man who finally understood the good things that God has given us, and was grateful for the good things that God does give us. And instead of railing against not getting the things that God has created in such a way that they will never make us happy, he stopped blaming God. The Big Idea, **Most men only know enough about God to be disappointed with Him.**

Let us pray. Our dearest Father in Heaven, Lord, first of all, Lord, I pray that you would just use these messages from Solomon to help each of us calibrate or recalibrate our brains to see life the way you would have us to see life, that we would not be blaming you for the things, or being angry at you because we're not able to find meaning in the things that you have created so that they would not provide meaning in the first place. That is crazy. But Lord, help us to embrace the good things that you

have given us. Help us to enjoy our lives, to enjoy our wives, to lead holy lives, to enjoy the work that we have put our hands to, that we would do it with all our might, and that we would give you the glory for your greatness. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.