

WHAT'S THE POINT?

*the **gospel** according to Ecclesiastes*

“For Us or Against Us?”

Ecclesiastes 8:16-9:12

I am the type of person who has often tried very hard to figure things out. I love to know the “in’s” and “out’s” of things. If I get together with new people, I want to evaluate their likes and dislikes and even what makes them “tick.” If I go to a restaurant, I might spend time evaluating the décor and what they’re trying to communicate with their atmosphere. When I study the Bible, I’ve spent hours upon hours trying to figure out how to put things together in the Scriptures that just don’t make sense to my mind.

To put it another way, I’m a “question-asker.” And I’m actually a “question-asker” who will ask the third, fourth or fifth question. While I’m grateful for the inquisitive spirit, it can also be a curse in some senses. I remember one time a friend of mine giving an illustration of a puzzle, saying something like, “Imagine that God gives you a puzzle. You have all the pieces and you try to figure out how to put it together. Eventually, you get it put together in your hands, and then God shows you that there’s still one piece left.” If I’m remembering correctly, my friend’s point was, “God purposefully does that in our lives, and how are you going to respond when God does that?”

My natural tendency is to then break the whole puzzle in frustration, maybe get upset at God because I thought my puzzle looked good, and then I’m going to try to put it back together again. But here’s part of the problem. I try to put the puzzle together because I think that if I do, then I’ll find peace. If I just know all the answers, then I’m in control and everything’s alright with the world.

But what if God doesn’t want us to know all the answers? What if my friend is right and God purposefully puts pieces in to confuse us? As Solomon has already stated in chapter 7 that God has made the day of prosperity and adversity so that “. . . so that man may not find out anything that will be after him.”¹ My friend is right. God doesn’t want me to know all the answers. And to someone like me, that can be extremely frustrating. But actually, I think that may be something that frustrates all of us.

Of course, you may not want to know the answers to everything, but you’d at least like to know the answers to the things you want answers to, right? Have you ever had a situation before though where human reason simply couldn’t comfort you? You came to a scenario where you had to say, “I either trust God or go insane.” I hope you listen carefully to what I’m about to say. God ordains for us to be in those scenarios.

Now before you get mad because you feel God has broken your puzzle, I want to actually say that it’s not I who came up with that truth. Solomon, under the inspiration of the Spirit, actually helps us to see that; and instead of that being completely depressing, Solomon shows us how we can be encouraged to live life with joy *because* we know God is in control of *everything*.

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 7:14.

Before we go further, let's read the entire text together this morning. So, turn in your Bibles to Ecclesiastes 8, and I'll start reading in verse 16. Before I read, let's pray again together:

¹⁶ When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night do one's eyes see sleep, ¹⁷ then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out. ⁹ But all this I laid to heart, examining it all, how the righteous and the wise and their deeds are in the hand of God. Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him. ² It is the same for all, since the same event happens to the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As the good one is, so is the sinner, and he who swears is as he who shuns an oath. ³ This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. ⁴ But he who is joined with all the living has 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 Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun. ⁷ Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do. ⁸ Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head. ⁹ Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. ¹⁰ Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going. ¹¹ Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all. ¹² For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.

I think verses 16 and 17 of chapter 8 actually serve as a conclusion of the previous verses and also an introduction into what's to come. In other words, last week, we saw how we are to live within a society that's sinful, and then in verses 16-17, goes on to talk about how to think about the things that happen in this world. Solomon's already told us that people are sinful and government can go awry. He's stated multiple times that we are still responsible to live wisely even though vain things can happen. And then he makes this statement in verses 16-17. How do these verses fit?

I think Solomon shows us that we are incessantly turning back to circumstances to say whether or not all is well. There's a natural bent in our hearts to evaluate our faithfulness based on what we see around us. In other words, this is how we think: we're being faithful if we're doing x, y, z and if certain "blessed" circumstances happen to us. So, when things are going our way we say, "God is so good!" But if hardships take place, we quickly wonder if either we've done something wrong or if God's mad at us.

² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 8:16–9:12.

This is where the title of the sermon comes in. **Is God for us or against us?** I came to that title by evaluating verses 16 and 17 with the verses that follow in chapter 9. Please keep that in mind. So, look at how Solomon speaks in verses 16-17. He says that he's first evaluated man's work. What he's discovered is that man's work is toilsome. It burdens us so much that we don't sleep well. But there may be even more than that here.

Think about it this way: Years ago, the first home computer was invented. This computer in some ways was to make people's work easier. You could work through data faster. Then the computer got better and better and better. Mix in with that the ease of communication with e-mail and cell phones and texting. Have we been able to work *less* because of increased technology? No. But before you blame technology, look at yourself. *We* are the ones who say, "Now I can do *more!*" So, we fill our time up with more. By the way, I don't think Solomon is saying that this is necessarily bad. Of course, working and activity can go to extremes where we then lose our other priorities. But Solomon here is simply saying our time is filled and with energy spent, we become more tired. Therefore, what we do in our lives cannot give us the fulfillment we're yearning for. In-and-of-itself what we do does not give us our ultimate meaning. In addition, what we do won't last forever. Instead, it will tire us out. So, if you're trying to evaluate whether you're "good" based on how much your labor satisfies you, at some point, you're going to be severely disappointed. Your labor wasn't intended for that. Yet, in our society and even in our churches, we tend to think something's only worth doing if it gives me this deep feeling of satisfaction, purpose and delight. If it's strenuous, stop. I mean, after all, Sunday's supposed to be a day of rest, right? Um, rest in the Lord! Not necessarily physical rest. Maybe you're eyes are too much on labor giving satisfaction and not Jesus. Labor, in and of itself, can't maintain that. It exhausts and makes you sleepless.

Now Solomon turns to God's work, and he is at a loss of words. Notice that he says he is trying to discern God's work *under the sun*. In other words, he's trying to figure out how to discern God's intentions and acts in this fallen world. And here's Solomon's conclusion: man will not figure it out. And not only will he not figure it out, but we're told twice that man *cannot* figure it out. This world is under a curse because humanity rejected God. Now this world suffers under that curse, and it's hard to discern what exactly God is doing through each individual event. While a wise person could say, "I know what God is doing," Solomon essentially says that person needs to be silent. So, Ventura, if you hear someone on the radio or on television saying, "This event happened because God was punishing for x, y, z" or "That hardship in your life is probably telling you there's some hidden sin that you're not confessing," be wary. Certainly God disciplines. Certainly God could use hardships in the life to lead to repentance. But we can't be certain in all scenarios.

In these two verses, Solomon urges us to be humble. He calls us away from leaning on our own understanding and spurs us on to simply trust God. Our acceptance is not based on circumstances in a fallen world. And if you struggle with this (which many people do at one time or another), Solomon continues in this discourse by emphasizing two truths: 1) Circumstances are not conclusive evaluators, and 2) We need to trust God and live life with joy in the Lord.

Let's look at the first point first:

- 1. Circumstances are not conclusive in defining our acceptance and value (vv. 1-3, 11-12).**

In verses 1-2, Solomon merges together man's work and God's work. He creates a contrast between two different types of people. There's the righteous, wise, good, ritually pure one who offers sacrifices to the Lord and keeps their promises. Then there's the wicked, evil, ritually unclean one who doesn't offer sacrifices to God and doesn't keep their promises. Clearly, you have one person who seeks and follows after God not only in their thoughts, but in their actions. And then you have one who doesn't care about God and reveals that through their actions.

Then, in verse 1, Solomon says that both types of people are in the hand of God. Now, sometimes being in God's hand can speak of protection, care, love. But other times, being in God's hand can simply refer to be under his control and judgment. So, Hebrews 10:31 says, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."³ I think that's what Solomon is getting at here because he goes on to say "Whether it is love or hate, man does not know; both are before him."⁴ The phrase "love" or "hate" refers to God's acceptance or rejection – like when God says that he loved Jacob but hated Esau.

So Solomon is saying that every person (and their actions) are under the providential, sovereign control of God. As a result, we could tend to think, "Ok, God is working in every single detail of life. Therefore, I ought to be able to discern whether he accepts or rejects me on the basis of the circumstances around me, right? Solomon says, "Wrong!" And he proves that point by going back to one stubborn reality which he's already mentioned before: death.

Death is referred to over ten times in these 12 verses through words like, "same event," "dead," "die," "memory . . . forgotten," "perished," "no share," "Sheol," and "evil time." Listen, if you want to evaluate your acceptance or rejection before God based on events, then you'd have to say *none* are accepted because *all* die! The worst event happens to *everyone*. Whether you are righteous and you do good works or you are wicked and you do not care about God, you will die.

But you could think from that, "Well, that's death. Of course everyone's going to die, but until that time we should still be able to evaluate God's acceptance or rejection based on our circumstances, right?" Well, look at verses with me again: ¹¹ Again I saw that under the sun the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to those with knowledge, but time and chance happen to them all. ¹² For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.⁵

Not only does the vanity of death happen to us all, but the vanity of life happens to us all. You could be a fast runner, but that doesn't mean you'll win the race. You could be wise and yet not have a job or money or favor in this life. In fact, Solomon goes so far as to say "chance" happens to them all. Now please understand that Solomon still believes that God is in control of everything. He's already taught that. But that doesn't mean that he can't use the word "chance." This word speaks to events that take place suddenly – without our ability to calculate them happening. We know this is the idea because Solomon then talks about man's "time," and he's referencing that man doesn't know when he's going to die. This is the idea of *chance*. He's not talking about blind chance. He's talking about providential chance. Under the sun, it doesn't make sense. Under the sun, we don't know when these trials and

³ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Heb 10:31.

⁴ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 9:1.

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 9:11–12.

difficulties will come. But we do know that they're guaranteed in all of our lives. And being righteous won't keep us from it. Being wicked won't guarantee worse. Everyone will have trial. Everyone will die.

And we don't have a choice in the matter. Solomon gives two examples on this. First, he talks about fish getting caught in the fishermen's net. Having seen *Finding Nemo* years ago, I think about the final scene where the fish are caught in that net. They're just swimming away, minding their own business, and then the net rises underneath them, leading them to their death! This is what Solomon is saying about death (and trials, too). We don't plan when they're going to happen. We're just going about life and they happen suddenly. The next example of a bird caught in a snare is the same example. Not by their choice, they're caught. So, in this world there will be trials and death. Going back to verse 3, Solomon also states another reason why there will be trial: the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.⁶ In other words, humans are sinful and they act sinfully.

How is that for a motivational speech, Ventura? Well, before you ignore Solomon as the most extreme pessimist you've ever met, think about this a little more. I've used this illustration multiple times, but I've always found it helpful personally. When you go to a jeweler and you ask to see a diamond, they will always get some kind of darker velvet (or some other material that's darker) in order to create the contrast and show the greater beauty and shine of the diamond. The same is true here. Solomon doesn't want to sugar-coat the difficulties and pains of this life. If you're in pain, it's painful. If you've gone through trials, it's a trial. And, Solomon continually calls it vanity and evil. In other words, call it what it is. These things are a result of the Fall! That means they've happened because sin entered the world. So, don't minimize it.

But I would say that Solomon is not a pessimist in emphasizing the significance of the vanity around us. You see, a pessimist will look at the pain and difficulty and then think that all of life (and the rest of life) is just one of pain and "woe-is-me." It's the person who lives in *only* the reality of the bad. But while Solomon admits that evil is going to happen, he shockingly moves on by telling us that this life is worth living! But ironically, he is going to continue to talk about death in order to talk about the value of living this life. So, is God for us or against us? Circumstances can't tell us. We're all going to die. Oh, and by the way, death is bad. It's bad for everyone. To put another way:

2. Death is a result of the curse (vv. 4-6).

Does the fact that someone dies speak to God's acceptance or rejection? You simply can't know. But there are some things that you should learn from death. One lesson is that death is not our friend.

Look at verses 4-6 again: ⁴But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. ⁵For 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. ⁶Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have no more share in all that is done under the sun. ⁷

These verses remind me of the quote from the British missionary named C.T. Studd: **Only one life, 'twill soon be past, Only what's done for Christ will last.** Solomon's emphasis here on the importance of living over dying reveals that somehow what we do in this life matters. While I can't trace God's hand

⁶ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 9:3.

⁷ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 9:4-6.

nor understand the mysteries of his plan, we can be confident that there is a purpose. Even if we're in continuously difficult circumstances, Solomon says that life is still better than death. He communicates this by way of another analogy. He says a living dog is better than a dead lion. The type of dog spoken of here is a scavenging dog. In that time period dogs were generally looked down upon. They weren't prized. But a lion was seen as a powerful creature. However, if a lion is dead, it's of no value. Maybe even the scavenging dog would feast on the lion.

Living is better than dying. As one commentator named Phil Ryken puts it, death brings ignorance, irreparable loss and oblivion. Sin has brought death. Sin has brought about the decay of our bodies. To further quote Ryken, he writes, "Even the earthly emotions that make us feel most alive – feelings like the love and hatred and envy that the Preacher mentions in verse 6 – will disappear when we die. **When we consider all of the things that we lose through death – the people whom we love and all the little joys of life on this beautiful planet – it ought to make us appreciate the fact that we are still alive and breathing. However difficult life may be, at least it is better than the alternative! Where there's life, there's hope**" (Ryken, p. 207).

One side note. Some could say, "But if I'm a Christian, shouldn't I look forward to death?" Great question. To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. God says that the death of his saints is precious to him? Paul says that to be with the Lord is far better? However, Paul also says that to be on this earth was far better for the Philippians. Also, when Jesus died, we're told that he despised the shame for the joy set before him. Death was something to be conquered not embraced. If Jesus stayed dead, we'd be dead, too. So, like Christ, we should say "for the joy set before us," we'll endure the trials – including death. And, like Paul, we should realize that through circumstances of trials or ease, God is weaving it all for eternal glory. This life matters! He makes it so.

So, while I wish and yearn to be with Jesus, I also shouldn't wish to be dead. I should wish to be faithful in the life that he has given to me today and every day that he's given to me throughout all eternity.

And that leads us into the final point. Our acceptance isn't based on circumstances. Death is a result of the curse. So, does that mean we're rejected? No. Based on this then, Solomon calls us to trust God and enjoy his gifts.

3. Trust God and enjoy his gifts (vv. 7-10).

Recently I was talking with a friend about how often we will turn to circumstances to comfort us as opposed to God's Word. When I was in college, I was staunch in my theology on the authority of the Bible for life. Yet in practice, I didn't trust it. I was so concerned I was going to make the wrong decision that I'd say things like, "If the light turns red right now then I know you don't want me to do it." You might think that's silly (and it is), but maybe you've done things like that when you say, "God, I know you're with me in this endeavor if you give me an open door." But what we mean by "open door" is "favorable circumstances."

Now, why did I just pick that example? It's because God has given us his word, and what we want to do is jump ship from the Word and say, "Give me circumstances." But Solomon just said that circumstances can't be the final say. Certainly God can providentially, through circumstances, hedge you in from doing something. But ultimately, I believe that what God says in his Word matters most.

How does this apply to Solomon's point of being accepted before God? Well, here we are as people, and we're trying to figure out if God loves or hates us. We look at circumstances and begin to think the wicked are loved by God and some righteous are spurned by him. We know that can't be the case. So, where do we turn?

We turn to rock-solid, objective Truth. Look at verses 7-10 with me again: ⁷Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do. ⁸Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head. ⁹Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun. ¹⁰Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going. ⁸

If you mark in your Bible, highlight, underline, circle one phrase: "for God has already approved what you do." Solomon has been writing to those who are wise; so, I don't think Solomon is saying that God approves what anyone does. In addition, Solomon isn't say that if a wise person sins, then that sin is approved by God. Solomon's talking to the wise – to those who fear God. And Solomon's talking about the daily grind of life. He's talking about the eating, drinking and joys of life. He's talking about the blessings God has given to us to enjoy and yet because we spend our time worrying about whether this or that thing is right for us to do, we keep ourselves from seeing the blessings of God.

I know that I've wasted much time worrying and contemplating what God's sovereign will is. I've wasted time wondering if God is ok with what I did. And if you're like me, I think these words should be like a balm to your weary soul. Solomon forces our eyes to truth and demands that we stop looking to circumstances to dictate to us our perception of our acceptance or rejection before God. He says, "God has already approved of what you do!"

Ventura, I want everyone to look me in the eyes right now. Look up. Look at me. If you have trusted in Christ, God has approved of you and he approves of you rejoicing in him and his gifts! Now, I know that there are some of you who are as stubborn as I am and you'll say, "Yeah, I know, but. . . ." NO. The truth of God's acceptance is the nuclear bomb which is meant to destroy the sinful proclivity in our hearts to not trust God.

Listen, your soul needs rest and it's only found in God. Even if all circumstances were *perfect*, you'd still be dissatisfied apart from God. Instead, will you simply lay yourself at God's feet and believe what he says? You're approved in his sight! "But what if these circumstances are happening because of some sin in my life?" I remember talking to a family member who had that question once. My response was, "I don't know if that difficulty is because of sin, but here's what I do know. If you're a child of God, everything is in your life to draw you closer to God. So, if you had sinned, cling to Christ. If you don't know of sins, cling to Christ!"

This ultimately is what Ecclesiastes points us to. After all, how can we be accepted by God without Jesus? In Ephesians 1:6, we read that God, by his grace ". . . made us accepted in the beloved."⁹ The beloved is Jesus. We are accepted because of Jesus himself. Jesus, who was despised and rejected. Jesus, whom many thought could not be blessed because of the hardships and torture he faced. He is

⁸ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), Ec 9:7–10.

⁹ *The Holy Bible: King James Version*, Electronic Edition of the 1900 Authorized Version. (Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 2009), Eph 1:6.

the Blessed One. And we know he's blessed because he was the one who actually took the curse of death and defeated.

Ponder this. Humans rejected God. Human beings wanted to figure out God and do life on their own. They took God's gifts and hoarded them for their own self-centered benefits. And yet God, because he loved the world, sent Jesus to this world to take the punishment. Now you could say, "Why should I be punished for taking God's gifts and using them for my own benefit? I worked hard for these things."

But think of it a different way. If you went into work and you didn't follow the guidelines and procedures and you decided that you had a better way of doing things, and then every once in a while you fired people or hurt people who you didn't agree with. Then you took things home because you thought that the factory didn't need it. What would happen to you? At the least you'd be fired.

Now think of God and his creation? This creation was made for a reason and it all belongs to God. But instead of throwing the whole world into his prison of Hell, Jesus came to take the punishment of that treason. He loved people and then he was hated by the people – being put to death. And then God, the King, took the punishment and wrath that sinners deserved and poured it on Jesus. Jesus took that willingly. He suffered, then died. But then he rose from the dead. And he conquered the consequences of sin.

Now we're told that anyone who turns from their sins and turns to Jesus is accepted by God. And not only that, we have the assurance that we'll live forever with God. And not only that, we have the promise that even in this world we can honor God as each day, week or year goes by.

Listen, Ventura, this is extremely important to rehearse to your minds because what we do is we think, "Maybe this or that circumstance means God is not pleased with me." Now certainly there are things we can do in our lives that are not pleasing to the Lord. But I'm talking to the person who continuously tries to find something wrong in their lives – another reason why they're convinced they're a reject in God's eyes. To you, I want you to listen. Jesus didn't come to this earth, die, suffer wrath, rise from the dead, ascend into Heaven so that you could be lost. If Jesus died for you while you were a sinner, how much more convinced should you be that he'll never leave you nor forsake you? If Jesus died for you, how much more convinced should you be that he also wants to give you what is right and best?

Everything is under God's sovereign control. You can rest. But I know you might still think, "But if I just knew how this scenario would pan out, I'd be calm." No. Then that means you're resting in the circumstance. God wants you to rest in him. Circumstances change. God never changes. So, rest in Christ. You're accepted. But then what does that look like practically in your life? How does that change how you behave? Solomon says that this acceptance leads to joy and enjoyment in the everyday life.

So, when we know we're loved and embraced by God, we will then want to enjoy him in all things. So it makes sense that Solomon says we are to eat and drink with joy. Enjoy the food that you have! Don't waste your time worrying. See God's kindness in that he even gave you food to eat. He loves you!

Then he talks about white garments and oil not lacking. What is that talking about? I actually think the verbage relates to the physical relationship between a husband and wife. It's kind of like Proverbs 5:15-19. That fits with the next verse, too. If you're married, enjoy the blessing of your wife! Rejoice with your wife. Don't take her for granted. Flirt. Be cute. Complement. The Bible says we are to "rejoice with the wife of our youth!" Solomon's reiterating that here. If we're accepted by God, we will rejoice in the

blessing of our spouse if we're married. Don't spurn your spouse. Embrace, love and revel in the relationship.

Then he says work and work hard. Solomon doesn't say "Find the job that gives you satisfaction." Work can't fulfill you. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it. It could be a factory job or a job in the corner office. Because here's the reality, knowing that God has accepted you causes you to rejoice whether it's on the line or in the office. The knowledge of being reconciled with God will keep you from complaining about your work. Yes, the sweat of the brow is the result of the Fall. But Jesus has conquered the Fall and you have been rescued from Hell! But not only that, Jesus has guaranteed that whatever we do as Christians can matter for eternity.

Many of you know what is probably one of my most quoted verses: "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."¹⁰ Do you know what comes just a couple verses after that? The apostle Paul says, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ."¹¹ Do you see this? Because of Jesus, all that we can do can be maximized for God's fame – which is our eternal good.

Are we accepted? If you're a disciple of Jesus, yes. How do you know? Because circumstances? No. Because the Bible tells you that Jesus purchased your acceptance through dependence on Jesus. Trust God then, and in the face of this vain world, rejoice in God's blessings knowing that someday all futility will cease and everything will be made right and plain and you will forever praise God.

This is the gospel according to Ecclesiastes.

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¹⁰ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), 1 Co 10:31.

¹¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Wheaton: Standard Bible Society, 2001), 1 Co 11:1.