

Refuge City Church — March 26, 2023
“Freedom from Fatalism” (Ecclesiastes 9)

Introduction

- **LAST WEEK:** We need to know our place under the authority of our King. In so doing, His joy becomes our strength.
- **TODAY:** Too many accept life as it is. Since there’s no hope, they’re gonna live however they want, because there’s nothing to live for.

“Hopelessness” [Verses 1-3]

“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. 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. 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.”

- From Solomon’s ‘under the sun’ perspective, everyone dies and that’s it. So it doesn’t matter what we do, how I live, or who gets hurt in the process.
 - It’s the ‘You do you’ and ‘I’ll get mine’ mentality.
 - *Fatalism* = everything’s predetermined and therefore inevitable; breeds indifference.
 - **Verse 3:** “...the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live...”
 - **Romans 6:23**, “For the wages of sin is death...” — and they stop there with full acceptance.
 - “*Madness*” = foolishness; blindness.
 - *Insanity* = doing the same thing over and over again, expecting different results [att. to Albert Einstein]
 - They are choosing not to see that there is a better way. They are blinded by sin.
- **Video:** What sin does to you.
- Sin manipulates you to believe you’re bouncing from pleasure to pleasure.
 - *Reality* = momentary pleasure ends in a valley of despair, because it has no redeeming value.
 - So you have to climb to achieve the next moment, until you fall back into the valley from which you started.
- God is the only one who can “open your eyes” to the reality of your futile ways.
 - He did so by sending His Son to set the captives free and by opening the eyes of the blind. [Isaiah 61:1]
- When we accept the beautiful gift of salvation we find ourselves in the secure hand of God [vs. 1].

- **Job 27:8-12**, “For what is the hope of the godless when God cuts him off, when God takes away his life? Will God hear his cry when distress comes upon him? Will he take delight in the Almighty? Will he call upon God at all times? I will teach you concerning the hand of God; what is with the Almighty I will not conceal. Behold, all of you have seen it yourselves; why then have you become altogether vain?”
- **Job 28:12, 23-28**, “But where shall wisdom be found?... God understands the way to it, and he knows its place. For he looks to the ends of the earth and sees everything under the heavens. When he gave to the wind its weight and apportioned the waters by measure, when he made a decree for the rain and a way for the lightning of the thunder, then he saw it and declared it; he established it, and searched it out. And he said to man, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to turn away from evil is understanding.’”
- In the hand of God, who created & ordained the world, you are no longer having to strive for momentary pleasure.
- You’re no longer left behind, abandoned, or destroyed.
 - **Isaiah 62:3 NLT**, “The Lord will hold you in his hand for all to see— a splendid crown in the hand of God.”
 - **Psalms 16:1-2, 10-11**, “Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge. I say to the Lord, ‘You are my Lord; I have no good apart from you.’... For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

“Hope” [Verses 4-6]

“But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. 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. 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.”

- **Verse 4**: “...for a *living dog* is better than a *dead lion*.”
- There are two things that every person strives for in life ‘under the sun’.
 - To know, and to be known [knowledge and significance]
 - **Job 27:8**, “For what is the hope of the godless when God cuts him off, when God takes away his life?”
- Though I may be insignificant according to the world’s standards, I have the hope of life in Jesus’ name!
 - **Matthew 15:21-28**, “And behold, a Canaanite woman from that region came out and was crying, ‘Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David; my daughter is severely oppressed by a demon.’ But he did not answer her a word. And his disciples came and begged him, saying, ‘Send her away, for she is crying out after us.’ He answered, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ But she came and knelt before him, saying, ‘Lord, help me.’ And he answered, ‘It is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.’ She said, ‘Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters’ table.’ Then Jesus answered her, ‘O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire.’ And her daughter was healed instantly.”
 - This woman had the cards stacked against her [Canaanite; historical enemy of Israel, Gentile, woman, demon-possessed child]; insignificant in every way!
 - Her faith in Jesus as Lord was wholly and humbly submitted to receive even a speck from His holy table.

- She knew that apart from Christ, she and her daughter were hopeless.
- She understood that nothing in this world could satisfy her need.
 - Her worldly insignificance didn't matter. Only her knowledge of the One who could save her and her daughter.
- Her spiritual need could only be met by God Himself. That she recognized, and that she received.
- Humble, submissive, persistent faith gains hope in the eternal presence of God.
 - O to be a living dog, rather than a dead lion.

***“Fatalism”* [Verses 7-10]**

“Go, eat your bread with joy, and drink your wine with a merry heart, for God has already approved what you do. Let your garments be always white. Let not oil be lacking on your head. 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. 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.”

- Another encouragement to enjoy the life God has given you!
- *Fatalism* — **Verse 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.”
- *Freedom* — **Colossians 3:23-24,** “Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.”
 - God has blessed you with what you have...enjoy it!
 - **John 9:4,** “We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.”

***“Freedom”* [Verses 11-18]**

“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. 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 have also seen this example of wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me. There was a little city with few men in it, and a great king came against it and besieged it, building great siegeworks against it. But there was found in it a poor, wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man. But I say that wisdom is better than might, though the poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heard. The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.”

- There are no guarantees in this world.
- **Verse 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.”

- The wisdom of God keeps us consistent, balanced, strong in mind, fulfilled, and wealthy in spirit. [Matthew 5:3, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”]
- Wisdom keeps us alert, keeping watch for the traps of the enemy.
 - **Psalm 31:3-4**, “For you are my rock and my fortress; and for your name’s sake you lead me and guide me; you take me out of the net they have hidden for me, for you are my refuge.”
 - **Matthew 13:47-49**, “The kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of every kind. When it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the end of the age...”
- Wisdom allows us to bring the knowledge of salvation to others caught in the net of God’s imminent justice, and free them from the consequences of their fatalism.

Conclusion

- **Verse 17**: “The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools.”
- Seek the Lord in the quiet places [Matthew 6:6]. Seek His wisdom above all else [Matthew 6:33]. Learn from Him [Matthew 11:29] and establish your heart in His everlasting freedom.
 - **John 8:32, 36**, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free... So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”