

**Message #31****Ecclesiastes 9:7-10**

We look at a world that is filled with things that don't seem right or just. We look around a world that contains hardship, suffering, adversity and death and it can be depressing.

The problem is there are so many admonitions in the Scriptures which tell us to be joyful. The big question is how? How do we maintain a joy and happiness in a world filled with trouble and trial?

There is absolutely no doubt that a major key to happiness is to recognize the sovereignty of God. We will never be able to discover all the mysteries of life—either the positives or the negatives, but that does not mean we cannot be happy in our own lives.

When we are keeping God at the center of our lives and we recognize that He is sovereign and there are things in this world we will never understand, we are thinking in a very meaningful way.

**WHEN WE REVERENCE AND FEAR GOD FOR HIS SOVEREIGNTY AND FOCUS ON ENJOYING WHAT GOD HAS GIVEN TO US AND ON THE WAY WE SHOULD LIVE, WE CAN ENJOY THIS LIFE AND BE HAPPY .**

**KEY #1** – To have a happy life, we must be joyfully content in our heart with what God has given to us. **9:7**

In Psalm 104:14-15, we learn that God is the one who actually provides food and drink for a person. The admonition of this verse is that a man should have a cheerful heart about what God has provided. If needs are being met, we should be happy.

Now the last part of the verse gives us the reason (“for”) why we can be happy with our food and drink, specifically, “God has already approved your works.” In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon wisely observed that the ability to have enough food and drink and the ability to enjoy one's food and drink was a gift from God (2:24; 3:13; 5:18-19). Solomon's assumption here is if one has his needs met and is able to enjoy what he has, he is blessed and approved by God. When a typical Israelite could sit down at dinner night after night and enjoy a meal without some weapon in his hand, he was in fact experiencing the blessing of God and in this he could rejoice.

We tend to think happiness is found in what we don't have, but happiness is found in what we already have.

**KEY #2** – To have a happy life, we must have a spiritual life. **9:8**

Trying to have a joyful and happy life without being right with God is an impossibility. It will not and it cannot happen.

**Element #1** - The element of righteous . **9:8b**

It seems to me that “white clothes” is metaphorical imagery for a righteous life. A righteous life consists of being a believer by position and practice (i.e. Rev. 7:14; 22:11, 14).

I understand Solomon to be saying that a truly happy and fulfilled life is a spiritually righteous life. In other words, no real happiness or joy will ever be found in a life of sin. The believer who chooses to live in sin will never be joyful or happy for happiness is found in clothes that are white.

**Element #2** - The element of spirituality . **9:8b**

In the Scriptures, “oil” was used for many things: 1) Food (Ezek. 16:13); 2) Cosmetics (II Sam. 12:20); 3) Medicine (Is. 1:6); 4) Light (Matt. 25:1-9); 5) Ceremony (i.e. anointing a king – I Sam. 16:13). These are all various ways “oil” was used in the O.T. However, if we stick with a metaphorical interpretation as we did in the first verse, we may conclude that “oil” is often a symbol of the Holy Spirit (I Sam. 10:1, 6; 16:13-14; Is. 61:1; John 3:34).

As I understand Solomon, he is saying that a happy and joyful life comes to the believer who is living a life of righteous purity and is controlled by God’s Spirit. In other words, a godly spiritual life is demanded for one who will be happy. Dr. Chuck Swindoll said of this verse: “The idea, then, is to live a pure and godly life, walk in righteousness and letting the power of the Spirit flow through us” (p. 263).

**KEY #3** – To have a happy life, we need a good woman . **9:9**

When Solomon wrote these verses, he primarily aimed them at the man. First of all, we will notice that three times in this verse the noun “life” shows up. In each case, the noun is in plural form. Mr. Gesenius calls this a plural of excellence or majesty (Gesenius, p. 398). I understand Solomon to be saying that in order for a man to have a full, majestic life of enjoyment and happiness, he needs a good wife. Secondly, we may note that a commitment to loving one woman for all the days of life is what really brings meaning and fulfillment.

Notice thirdly that a wife is a gift from God to a man on this earth (“under the sun”). Dr. Walter Kaiser writes: “Celibacy or abstinence is not a holier state than matrimony, for the point (the writer) is making is the same as that of the writer of the book of Hebrews. Marriage is honorable and the marriage bed undefiled” (Cited from Swindoll, p. 264).

**KEY #4** – To have a happy life, we need to work hard at what we do. **9:10**

Meaning and fulfillment are not ever found in sloth. Meaning and fulfillment are found in diligent, intense work. Whatever you do, do it with all your might.

The key to happiness is to have God at the center of our possessions: our spirituality, our love life and our work. If God is at the center, we will find fulfillment and happiness in the midst of many things we do not understand.