

Five pillars about work under the sun and five corresponding take-aways for us.

I. Trust that the Outcome of your Work is in God's Hands (8:14-15)

Take away: So enjoy the gracious outcomes that God gives under the sun (8:15)

Kaiser (146): It is God alone who keeps him occupied all the days of his life as the great God of the universe answers all the toil and labor mortals do under the sun with His gifts so real and so foundational as eating, drinking, and rejoicing in the work they are given by God.

II. Tremble that the Work of God is not Discoverable (8:16-9:1)

Kaiser (150): What mortals know is partial and incomplete. Mortals can dig and search for wisdom as much as they wish, but they will discover that they will be as shut out from their desired goal for comprehensive knowledge as the person who went on the same quest for wisdom in Job 28. The author of Job 28 plainly declared: "Man does not know the way to [wisdom]" (Job 28:13), for only "God understands the way (Job 28 :23). In fact, God said to man, "The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is discernment" (Job 28:28). No wonder, then, that even so-called wise men cannot know what goes on under the sun. Human insight, understanding, and reason, like water, cannot rise higher than their source... Therefore, to the degree that God reveals His plan to believers, to that degree only are they able to apprehend that much of the plan of God. Yet there still are mysteries and puzzling aspects that remain. Only God knows entirely; we mortals know only in part.

Take Away: The works of the righteous are in the hand of God (9:1)

Kaiser (150): Our quest for identity, meaning, and an explanation of the presence of evil, injustice, and inequities in life must end where Solomon's did—in the fact that God sits at the helm, ruling and overruling for good. Consequently, His people, their works, and their very lives are protected and governed by the God who is over all. They are safe in His hands.

III. Understand Death does not Respect Deeds (9:2-6)

Take Away: While there's Life there's Hope (9:4)

Shaw (127): The contrast that Solomon offers was probably funnier in his day than it is in ours. In Solomon's context, the lion was seen as a regal animal. The dog, on the other hand, was a despised scavenger. So Solomon has flipped the evaluation around. Even a living dog is better than a dead lion. Why so? Because with the living there is yet hope. With the dead, their fate, as it were, has been sealed. The point of verse 5 is that the living, knowing that they will die, have the opportunity to prepare for that death, to use their time of hope to prepare for the time when hope is gone.

Kaiser (153): Solomon's point is plain: While men are still alive there is hope--hope of preparation for meeting God, hope of living significantly, hope of doing something to the glory of God before all men personally face Him as 12:14 warns, when a person will have to give a detailed accounting of his life to determine if it has been lived in a manner well-pleasing to God.

IV. Seek God's Approved Work for You (9:7-10)

Kaiser (155): The reason for such action is stated immediately: "For God has already accepted your works" (9:7, NKJV). Righteous men need not worry whether God is indifferent to them and their lives: He is not; they are the special objects of His gifts and His acceptance.

Shaw (128): But God here enjoins us to enjoy the small and ordinary things of life, for he has already approved it. The final clause of the verse, 'for already God is pleased with your works,' is not a general statement that God has already approved whatsoever a man might do. Instead, it is the closing remark on the recommendation that we eat and drink what God has provided in a joyful and thankful manner.

Kaiser (156): Because ordinary people could not maintain and perpetually clean their cool and pleasant white garments as could people of wealth and rank, they reserved such clothes for especially important or festive occasions. Accordingly, white garments became emblems of joy and festivity. The same was true of perfuming, or anointing, oneself with oils.

Kaiser (158): Believers are to be rebuked for rejecting God's worldly gifts and refusing to use them in a proper way. Out of a distorted view of worldliness, wherein every pleasure ordained by God for man's enjoyment is either denied or begrudgingly used, many have developed a super-pious, unhappy, and even miserable existence. This text proclaims liberation to them. Brother and sister: rejoice in God's good gifts, and ask for His ability rightfully to use them.

Take Away: Work with all your might (9:10).

V. Recognize Successful Work is in the Hand of God (9:11-16)

Kaiser (163): Advantages and resources often mean very little if God is not in those talents.

Take Away: Therefore, be impressed with true wisdom (9:13)

VI. Conclusion: