

Hand of God and Men's Hands

Ecclesiastes 9

Outline

- 1 | Only God judges the life of a man
- 2-6 | All men can expect the same fate in the end
- 7-9 | Enjoy life while you can
- 10 | Make your plans and do them now, you can't do anything when you're dead
- 11-12 | Everyone will fail sometime; death comes suddenly
- 13-18 | "Wisdom is better than strength"; "one sinner destroys much good"

Reflections

The human hand is comprised of 27 bones (see image below) and is used to perform many complicated tasks, from the very intricate, like using tools to assemble a watch to lifting things of tremendous weight. They are also used in a variety of manners, punching someone in a boxing match to caressing the cheek of a loved one. Taylor and Schwartz¹ in their article describe the hand like this.

It is obvious to all that the human hand represents a mechanism of the most intricate fashioning and one of great complexity and utility. But beyond this it is intimately correlated with the brain, both in the evolution of the species and in the development of the individual. Hence, to a degree we "think" and "feel" with our hands, and, in turn, our hands contribute to the mental processes of thought and feeling.

While I might not agree with their thoughts regarding the evolution of the human species, I do agree that we do "think and feel" with our hands. It seems appropriate then that the NASB² has divided this chapter with headings related to hands.

1. "Men Are in the Hand of God" - v. 1-9
2. "Whatever Your Hand Finds to Do" - v. 10-18

Ecclesiastes 9:1 NASB For I have taken all this to my heart and explain it that righteous men, wise men, and their deeds are in the hand of God. Man does not know whether it will be love or hatred; anything awaits him.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 NASB Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no activity or planning or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol where you are going.

Verse 1 is connected to the ending of chapter 8 and that theme is carried through the next 8 verses. There is a sense of despair and a fatalistic tone to the writings of the Preacher that doesn't correlate to our understanding of God today. He didn't have the advantage of having God's revelation in written form as we do today. So we know that it is true that all men are equal before God and that God judges impartially, however we also know that there are two separate fates that men can look forward to: eternity in heaven or eternity in hell.

Jesus taught about this repeatedly but best illustrates it in His parable of the separation of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25. The sheep represent those who show compassion and kindness to other regardless of their place in life—sick, naked, in prison, hungry, homeless, etc.—and the goats represent those who did things to be noticed and superficially to honor God—calling on the name of the Lord but not caring about others. What we do with our hands is important to God because He holds us in His

1 Taylor, Craig L., and Robert J. Schwartz. "The Anatomy and Mechanics of the Human Hand | O&P Virtual Library." *Artificial Limbs* 2.2 (1955): 22-35.

http://www.oandplibrary.org/al/1955_02_022.asp

2 (NASB) *New American Standard Bible*. La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995. Print.

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hand. So whatever you do, "do it with all your might", especially in coming to aid of others.

Lord, You have blessed us with hands and made us unique among all Your creation. With our hands we can do many things, both loving and harmful. Help us to do the things that display Your love to others, especially to those who are in need. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Human Hand



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