

# “No Matter What You Do, Work at It With All Your Might [Ability]”



## SABBATH—MARCH 3

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY: Ecclesiastes 9.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “No matter what you do, work at it with all your might [ability]. Remember, you are going to your grave. And there isn't [is not] any work or planning or knowledge or wisdom there” (Ecclesiastes 9:10, NIV).

**IN 2004, A 70-YEAR-OLD ITALIAN MAN DIED.** Seventy-year-old Italians dying is not anything new. But how he died was new. Aldo Busato was a retired farmer. He was killed quickly by a World War I bomb. The bomb was part of his collection of military things. He was in his garden, showing his collection to a friend. The bomb exploded. It killed him and seriously injured his friend.

We cannot make sense of things like this. We must learn to trust in God's goodness.

Solomon again touches on this theme in Ecclesiastes 9. His focus is on death. This is a theme that has appeared in other places in Ecclesiastes. Remember that Solomon is at times giving opinions from a worldly viewpoint. This viewpoint should help us understand the uselessness of our life without a God who promises justice, answers, and eternal<sup>1</sup> life. Solomon is focusing on death. He is also talking to us about life and how we should be living now.

<sup>1</sup>eternal—forever; without beginning or end; lasting forever.

**SUNDAY—MARCH 4**

**IN GOD’S HANDS  
(Ecclesiastes 9:1)**

Read Ecclesiastes 9:1. This verse continues the flow from Ecclesiastes 8:17. In Ecclesiastes 8:17, Solomon explained that we cannot understand God’s ways. Then in Ecclesiastes 9:1 he says something like this: We surely do not understand God’s ways. But we can know that the Lord looks after those who are faithful to Him, wherever they are.

**How fair do you think this statement is? Even if you agree with it, what does it mean that the faithful are “in God’s hands”?**



**Jesus holds us in His hands.**

To say that we are in God’s hands does not mean we will never have pain, suffering, or tragedy. The most

faithful of all Christians can never be sure of what will happen to them. That is perhaps what Solomon meant by the last part of Ecclesiastes 9:1. Sure, we might be in God’s hands. But that does not mean we will not suffer. The difference is that, as Christians, we can trust God’s goodness and mercy,<sup>2</sup> no matter what happens to us. Imagine suffering without knowing there is a loving, caring God who promises to “wipe away every tear from [our] eyes’” (Revelation 7:17, NIV).

**Put yourself in the place of a faithful Bible person who was in great trouble, but who was still in God’s hands. How about Joseph or John the Baptist, when they were in jail? How about Esther saving her people from death? Or maybe Daniel in the lions’ den? Whichever person you pick, try to imagine how easy it would have been for that person to have doubted God’s love and care. What lessons can you learn that could help you when you are tempted to doubt God?**

**MONDAY—MARCH 5**

**ONE END? (Ecclesiastes 9:2)**

Read Ecclesiastes 9:2. This verse is a good example of how important it is to read Ecclesiastes with the whole Bible in mind. This is also a good time to repeat the warning given in *The*

<sup>2</sup>mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

## Lesson 10 “No Matter What You Do, Work at It With All Your Might [Ability]”

*SDA Bible Commentary*: “Verses such as these should not be twisted out of the Bible and made to teach some supposed truth that God never planned them to teach” (vol. 3, p. 1060; adapted).

At the same time, Solomon’s point is very good if we understand it correctly. Everyone dies. Death is stronger than nature. One could argue that death is part of nature itself. Anything that lives dies. And it makes no difference if you are righteous (holy) or not. Death always wins out.

To say that one end (death) awaits everyone, no matter how we live, is the same as saying that one end awaits everyone who drinks, no matter if we drink water or arsenic.<sup>3</sup> If we take only the short (blind) view of things, death is the same end for all. But the short view is just the short view. It is the same as reading the first few sentences of a great story and mistaking those sentences for the whole story. The whole Bible gives us the long (wise) view.

**What is the final end of all people? Daniel 12:2; Matthew 25:32-41; John 3:16; John 5:29; Revelation 20:6-15.**

The Bible is clear that there is not one end for all. There is either eternal life or eternal destruction. There is no middle ground. Either we will live forever, or we will be dead forever.

The good news is that through Jesus, every human has the chance to live forever. Jesus died as the Substitute<sup>4</sup> for all people. Jesus’ sacrifice was more than enough for everyone. Which of the two ends is yours? It really depends on our own choice.



**We all have a chance to live forever because of Jesus.**

**Think about your choices, not just the big ones, but the day-to-day “little” choices. What end are these choices pointing to?**

### TUESDAY—MARCH 6

#### THE DEAD (Ecclesiastes 9:3-6)

Here let me die: for to give birth to those  
Who can but suffer many years and die,  
Methinks, is merely propagating [continuing] death,  
And multiplying murder.  
—Lord Byron

<sup>3</sup>arsenic—a poison used to kill insects.

<sup>4</sup>substitute—someone who takes another person’s place. Jesus is our Substitute because He died for our sins.

## Lesson 10 “No Matter What You Do, Work at It With All Your Might [Ability]”

A famous Russian writer, Leo Tolstoy, wrote, “A man understands that death is the end of everything. Then he knows that there is nothing worse than life either.”—Adapted.

Tolstoy’s words are negative. But he does have a good point. It is sad to think that life ends in death and that death is the end of everything.

**Think about Ecclesiastes 9:3-6 from the viewpoint of someone who does not believe in God or in any afterlife. Try to put yourself in the mind of someone who believes that death is the end of everything. What purpose can you find to life? What sense can you make of all the things you do when you know that one day you, your children, and all their children will be dead?**

**Now read Ecclesiastes 9:3-6 from our viewpoint as Seventh-day Adventist Christians. How different is the message you get from these verses when comparing<sup>5</sup> them between the Seventh-day Adventist viewpoint and the worldly viewpoint?**

We should be so thankful for what Christ has offered us through His death and resurrection (return to life). Without Him, we would have only the hopelessness shown in Ecclesiastes 9:3-6. How valuable our faith should be to all of us. How important it is for

us to guard and protect our faith. Our lives depend on it!



What hope we have!

**WEDNESDAY—MARCH 7**

**NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION  
(Ecclesiastes 9:5-10)**

As Adventists, we use Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6 to support our position on the state of the dead.<sup>6</sup> And this is right, because the dead “do not know anything,” and “they will no longer have a share in all that is done under the sun” (NASB). At least, that is, until Jesus comes back. But Solomon is not just writing about the state of the dead. He is trying to make an important point about life itself. Yes, the verses talk about death. But they also point to the bigger picture of life and to how we should live.

**What point about life is Solomon making in Ecclesiastes 9:5-10?**

<sup>5</sup>comparing—showing how things are the same.

<sup>6</sup>state of the dead—the condition of people as they lie in death (Job 14:12; Psalm 6:5; Psalm 115:17; Psalm 145:4). Seventh-day Adventists believe that after people die, they have no awareness (knowledge) of life. But when Jesus returns the second time, He will bring believers back to life and take them home to heaven.

## Lesson 10 “No Matter What You Do, Work at It With All Your Might [Ability]”

**How can we use this point in our lives?**

This life is temporary (Job 8:9). One day, this earth will be gone (2 Peter 3:10-12). But this life is important because how we live on earth will decide our future for eternity.<sup>7</sup> The decisions we make here can take only seconds and can decide our future in heaven. How important it is for us to take our time on earth seriously. We must make wise decisions for our souls. With such eternal results at stake, it would be foolish to live any other way.

**How do the following verses support the idea of living for eternity?**

Mark 14:38 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 14:12 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2 Corinthians 6:2 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2 Peter 3:10-14 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>7</sup>eternity—life without end; forever.



Praying helps us to live for eternity.

The decisions we make are important. But the most important decision of all is the decision we make for Christ. This decision requires your answer to the Holy Spirit. We choose to die to self and live for Christ. Have you made that decision yet? Just going to church, or even believing in Jesus, is not making that decision. This one decision will decide how you will spend eternity.

**THURSDAY—MARCH 8**

**TIME AND CHANCE  
(Ecclesiastes 9:11-18)**

We have all heard, seen, or even experienced injustice. Sometimes life

## Lesson 10 “No Matter What You Do, Work at It With All Your Might [Ability]”

just seems to work in a way that is unfair to us.

A young woman is struck down with a serious disease. A man is laid off from work because of the poor economy. A star athlete slips and falls on the stairs. His career is ruined. The list goes on and on.

**What is Solomon’s point in Ecclesiastes 9:11-18? Do you agree or not? If not, why not?**

From a human viewpoint, it can seem that “time and chance” rule over all our lives. But that is not the Bible’s position. The Bible teaches that there is a God who sees all things (Psalm 11:4; Proverbs 5:21). He is very involved in human affairs (Proverbs 16:9; Daniel 2:21; Matthew 6:25-31). The important thing for Christians is to come to a personal knowledge of God. This is the knowledge of His love that helps us to hold on to Him when it seems that “time and chance” are treating us cruelly.

**What point does Ecclesiastes 9:13-16 make?**

Solomon is talking about more injustice. He is talking about someone who does something worthy, but who is forgotten instead of honored. But God will not forget. He will also reward (Luke 6:35; Colosians 3:24; Hebrews 10:36; Revelation 22:12).

**What do you say to someone to whom “time and chance” have dealt**

**a cruel blow? How can you tell that person about God’s love and care?**

### FRIDAY—MARCH 9

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 191; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 453; vol. 4, pp. 306, 307; *Fundamentals [Basics] of Christian Education*, p. 245; *The Great Controversy [War]*, p. 662; *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 91.

“Christ wants His hearers to understand that we cannot get salvation after death. Jesus explains what Abraham answered, ‘Son, remember what happened in your lifetime. You received your good things. Lazarus received bad things. Now he is comforted here, and you are in terrible pain. Besides, a wide space has been placed between us and you. So those who want to go from here to you can’t [cannot] go. And no one can cross over from there to us.’ (Luke 16:25, 26, NlrV). So, Christ showed the hopelessness of looking for a second chance. This life is the only time given to us in which to prepare for eternity.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 263.

“In every period of history, people are given their day to understand. This is a testing time, in which they may have a chance to be reunited to God. But there is a limit to this grace. Mercy may plead for years and may not be accepted. But there comes a time when mercy makes one last

## Lesson 10 “No Matter What You Do, Work at It With All Your Might [Ability]”

plea. The heart becomes so hardened that it stops accepting the leading of God’s Holy Spirit. Then the sweet, winning voice pleads for the sinner no longer, and the warnings stop.”—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 587.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

❶ As a class, do you know someone whom “time and chance” have really hurt? What can you, as a group, do to show that person that God’s love is real?

❷ How can you help those in your

church who have not yet made a choice to surrender to God? How can you help them see that it is very important not to delay this serious decision?

❸ Have people talk about a special example in which they saw clearly the closeness and nearness of God in their lives. What can you learn from each other’s experiences?

❹ As a class, discuss the need to prepare for eternity. How are we to “prepare for eternity”?