

# When Time and Chance Rule

Ecclesiastes 9:1-12



## The Illusion of Control

Thinking we have control when we really don't. Examples?  
What is the problem? How much control do we actually have?

## A Bumpy Ride

Some rides are inherently bumpy. Examples?  
What is the problem of expecting that we can avoid the bumps in an inherently bumpy ride?  
What if the Christian life isn't any smoother than a non-Christian life?

## Ecclesiastes 8:17

No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all their efforts to search it out, no one can discover its meaning. Even if the wise claim they know, they cannot really comprehend it.

"Comprehend its meaning" = Know how to make it work

*No one can make life what we want it to be*

## Ecclesiastes 9:1-12

- 1:** Jesus told Peter that Peter would be killed for Jesus. Peter asked about John's future. Jesus said that John's journey shouldn't be Peter's concern. "You follow me." John 21:17-23
- 2-3a:** Everyone dies. Important earthly distinctions make no difference
- 3b:** Living people are not better people! No one deserves to escape death
- 4-6:** Being alive is better. Kind of... We know we'll die
- 7-10:** What we are to do in life can only be done while we are alive
- 11-12:** "Time and chance" = Not knowing the plan of God



## The Main Point

**Our lives are a mist: Unpredictable. Without assurance of reason or justice. Ending in death**

**Yet God's people are in His hands for final and unending joy and goodness**

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Romans 8:28

"The last enemy to be destroyed is death." 1 Cor. 15:26

## Application

### Accept the reality that our lives are a mist

God is caring for the righteous and wise, yet it may not be easy or pleasant

Paul and Barnabas were "strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. 'We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God,' they said." Acts 14:22

The difference between Christians and non-Christians is NOT how challenging life is

The difference is the presence and the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, ...) amid the difficulty

<sup>13</sup> Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." <sup>14</sup> Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. <sup>15</sup> Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." <sup>16</sup> As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil." James 4:13-16

## Those who trust Him are in His caring hands

Everything He does is an expression of His love

Yet His love includes discipline (trouble)

Like the discipline of good parents. A good coach or teacher. A good physical therapist

<sup>7</sup>Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as his children. For what children are not disciplined by their father? <sup>8</sup>If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. <sup>9</sup>Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! <sup>10</sup>They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. <sup>11</sup>No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” Hebrews 12:7-11  
“The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.” Job 1:21  
“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him” Romans 8:28

## Enjoy God’s gifts and do God’s work

“Eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart.” (9:7)

“Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.” (9:10)

“If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.” James 4:17

## How?

By the Spirit of God working in us

To understand our trouble without despair

To know our future hope without disengaging in life

“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.” James 1:5

## Understanding our lives

The difference between Christians and others is not how pleasant or challenging life is

The difference is the fruit of the Spirit:

love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope (and courage) that you have.” 1 Peter 3:15

## When time and chance rule...

Remember:

We can’t control how life unfolds. And God doesn’t promise an easier life

Rather, the Holy Spirit of God in us brings...

Hope and courage that is beyond reason

Love that is greater than hate

Joy and peace even in trouble

Strength for the right path even when it is costly

Final goodness in every trouble by His grace

“I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.” Eph. 1:18-19

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## Reflection Questions for later today or this week...

1. In what ways is your life like a mist? How is that affecting you?
2. What does it look like to trust the hand of God, even through unpredictable, unjust, and troubling days?
3. How does the Holy Spirit bring the fruit of the Spirit in our lives? What is our part in that work?