

Ecclesiastes 9:10

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

Analysis

The Preacher urges action: 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.' The imperative 'do it with thy might' (be-kol kochakha aseyhu, בְּכָל־כַּחַךְ עָשֵׂה) calls for wholehearted effort while opportunity exists. The rationale: death ends earthly activity—'no work... in the grave' (Sheol, שָׁאֹל). This verse doesn't contradict earlier observations about vanity but urges diligence despite life's brevity. The combination of realism (life is short, death is certain) and activism (therefore work diligently now) characterizes biblical wisdom. Paul similarly urged: 'work out your salvation... for it is God which worketh in you' (Philippians 2:12-13). The verse teaches that mortality should inspire diligent faithfulness, not passive resignation.

Historical Context

Ancient Israelite understanding of Sheol pictured it as shadowy existence where active service ceased (Job 3:17-19; Psalm 88:10-12). Only later revelation clarified resurrection and eternal reward (Daniel 12:2-3). Yet even with limited eschatology, the Preacher urges vigorous engagement with present opportunities. This anticipates Jesus's parable of the talents: faithfully use what God provides during this life (Matthew 25:14-30). Paul's urgency about gospel proclamation reflected similar conviction: limited time demands diligent effort (2 Timothy 4:2). The Reformers emphasized vocation—whatever your calling, pursue it wholeheartedly

as service to God. The Puritans coined the phrase 'redeeming the time' (Ephesians 5:16), emphasizing diligent use of life's brief opportunity.

Related Passages

Romans 2:1 — Judging others

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Study Questions

1. What work has God currently given you ('whatsoever thy hand findeth to do'), and are you pursuing it wholeheartedly?
2. How does awareness of death's approach motivate diligent faithfulness rather than passive resignation or anxious despair?

Interlinear Text

לְכַדֵּב	בְּכָחָב	עֲשֵׂה	הַ	דִּבְרָה	תִּמְצֵא	אֲשֶׁר	רַכְבָּל	לְ
H3605	H834	findeth	Whatsoever thy hand	do	it with thy might			
	H4672		H3027	H6213				H3581
do	H3588	אֵין	כִּי	עֲשֵׂה	מְעַשׁ	הַ	וְכָבֵד	וְכָחֵם
H6213	H369	for there is no work		nor device	nor knowledge	in that	nor wisdom	H2451
	H4639		H2808	H1847				
in the grave	H834	אַתָּה	אֲשֶׁר	הַלְּךָ	שָׁמְהָה:			
H7585	H859	whither thou goest	H1980	H8033				

Additional Cross-References

Colossians 3:23 (Parallel theme): And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;

Ephesians 5:16 (Parallel theme): Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

Romans 12:11 (Parallel theme): Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

Psalms 6:5 (Parallel theme): For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?

1 Corinthians 9:24 (Parallel theme): Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

Ecclesiastes 11:6 (Parallel theme): In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.

Jeremiah 29:13 (Parallel theme): And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

Matthew 6:33 (Parallel theme): But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

1 Corinthians 9:26 (Parallel theme): I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air:

1 Corinthians 15:10 (Parallel theme): But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.