

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-כֹּחְךָ עֲשֵׂהוּ) calls for wholehearted effort while opportunity exists. The rationale: death ends earthly activity—'no work... in the grave' (Sheol, שְׁאוֹל). 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

ל	ר	אֲשֶׁר	א	תִּמְצָא	יָדְךָ	עָשֵׂה	ה	בְּכֹחְךָ		
H3605		H834		findeth	Whatsoever thy hand	do	it with thy might			
			H4672		H3027	H6213	H3581			
ה	עָשֵׂה	כִּי	אֵין	מַעֲשֵׂה	ה	וְחִשְׁבּוֹן	יָדְךָ	עֵת	וְחִכְמָה	ה
	do	H3588	H369	for there is no work		nor device	nor knowledge	nor wisdom		
	H6213			H4639		H2808	H1847	H2451		
וּלְ	בִּשָּׂא	ר	אֲשֶׁר	אֶתְּ	ה	הֵלֵךְ	שָׁמָּה:			
	in the grave		H834	H859	whither thou goest		H8033			
	H7585				H1980					

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.