

# The Final Attempt and Failure. 8:16-9:12

by W.J. Erdman

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*The Seeker's final attempt to solve the problem of life under the sun ends in futility, as he realizes that death and evil are inevitable and that chance can overrule all.*

**Scripture:** Ecclesiastes 8:17 - 9:1, Ecclesiastes 9:10-12

**Topics:** "Human Destiny", "Vanity Of Life"

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## Description

In this sermon by W.J. Erdman, the Seeker delves into the complexities of life under the sun, exploring the relationship between human works and destinies with the purpose and work of God. Despite thorough exploration, the Seeker realizes the inscrutability of God's purpose and the inevitability of death for all. As he contemplates the unknown future after death and the unpredictability of life 'under the sun,' he finds solace in the busyness and fellowship of living. Ultimately, the Seeker's philosophy falters, leading him to the conclusion of enjoying life's simple pleasures and embracing the inevitable vanity of existence.

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## Transcript

Once more, and for the last time, the Seeker attempts to solve the problem of life under the sun. Extremes there will be, and contrarities many, but might not clear foresight forestall some of them and shape life and direct its course?

So he applies his heart to find out how the various and multitudinous works and destinies of men under the sun are related to the purpose and work of God. He would, as it were, find it now, as a wise man who could tell others; but all he can say, after thorough exploration, is, that though a wise man say he knows, he really does not; what he does know is, that all the allotments of all men of good and of evil, of love and of hate, are in the hand of God. All is before them, and none can tell beforehand what his lot or "chance" shall be; each moves blindly to his fate; God's purpose concerning each and all is inscrutable; and especially no foresight can forestall the inevitable "event," the common doom of death, which will close the experience of each allotment. In the grave is the end of all their human toil and endeavor, and toward it moves "the innumerable caravan."

Note, again, that when first he started he was saddened by the thought how the future on earth after death was all unknown, but now he discovers that no man can tell or find out the future of his present time "under the sun." Note, too, how, in the earlier stages of the Search, it was repeatedly said that the dead were better off than the living, and that life was vanity, because no one knew what would be after him on the earth; but now, in this later more philosophic mood, life seems preferable to death and the inactivity

and silence of the grave, for a man in fellowship with living! men feels confident, and can still be devising' and doing, and have his portion under the sun, and enjoy the rush and roar of the busy world. " A living dog is better than a dead lion." Besides this, many men might have lived more moderately and not gone prematurely to the grave in the evil madness of their heart. They would not obey this law of a golden mean. However this may be, his philosophy fails him again, and altogether.

With this preference of life and its busy scenes the Resort is again to the conclusion to eat his bread and drink his wine with a merry heart; even to enjoy the fragrant delights of domestic and social life; to live while he lives his life of inevitable vanity, and to work with all his might to secure the means of such enjoyment. It is in a sadly baffled spirit, in a pathetic irony, the Seeker so talks to himself; he again says, "thou." And, as once before such conclusion was confuted with a contradiction and sore evil, and all his knowledge met with an utter breakdown, even after his pious words concerning worship; so now, after all this complacent prudential advice and this exhortation to strenuous exertion to make the most of life, he sees, turning his thoughts to race and battle, and toil and endeavor under the sun, how many laborious lives never meet with any success, and how indiscriminating chance overrules all and suddenly ensnares men in an evil time. Again, doubt and despair darken over the weary melancholy scene. The law of a " golden mean " is invalid; there are extremes and will be; "a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment," but even for him a sudden "chance" of unexpected extreme evil may fall.

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