**Ecclesiastes 9:11-12**

[*https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/eccl/eccl-9/ecclesiastes-911-12/*](https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/eccl/eccl-9/ecclesiastes-911-12/)

*Unexpected and unpredictable circumstances are a part of life and often interrupt the predictable flow of events. We cannot control, understand, or perfectly anticipate what life has to offer.*

This passage continues the implications from death being the fate of all men, proclaiming that *man does not know his time.*Death is certain for all, but no one knows the day of their death. Solomon uses an analogy of*fish*that are *caught in a net and birds*that are *trapped in a snare.*Neither the fish nor the bird expected to be caught, but caught they are. So it is with death.

Solomon calls the net *treacherous.*Humans were not created for death. Death is an interrupter and a usurper. Death is viewed throughout scripture as an enemy that Jesus vanquishes. The demise of death through Jesus is predicted immediately after the fall of man, the introduction of death in [Genesis 3:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Genesis+3.15&t=NASB95), and culminates in [Revelation 20:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+20.14&t=NASB95) when both death and Hades are thrown into the lake of fire.

Until the final demise of death, Jesus’ defeat of death can be appropriated by any human through faith. The Apostle Paul quotes [Hosea 13:14](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Hosea+13.14&t=NASB95) saying, “death is swallowed up in victory” through the death and resurrection of Jesus ([1 Cor 15:54-55](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Cor+15.54-55&t=NASB95)).Even so, death is an unnatural enemy, and death is something that *suddenly falls* upon and ensnares us. Even though death has been vanquished, when we experience death, it is still*an evil time.*Jesus wept when He encountered the death of His friend Lazarus, even though He knew Lazarus would soon rise from the dead ([John 11:35](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=John+11.35&t=NASB95)).

Solomon adds an element to the inevitability of death: *time and chance.* In the end, not everything will follow normal cause-and-effect. Someone who lives a healthy lifestyle might live longer. But they will still die. *Time and chance* happen *to all*. Sometimes people who live healthy lifestyles die prematurely, while people who abuse themselves live a long life.

The word translated *chance* can also be translated “events.” We are not in control of circumstances. Things happen, events transpire. Events we had nothing to do with and cannot control. And those events can have huge impacts on us. The longer we live, the more likely such events are to impact us. Humans often pretend it is not so. Humans often are oblivious to this reality. But it is reality. No matter what we do, we cannot prevent *time and* *chance,*events, from overriding the consequences of our own actions.

Solomon uses examples of normal cause/effect that *time and chance*can upend. He says *the race is not to the swift*. Normally the fastest person wins a *race.*But *time and chance*sometimes intervene. The fastest runner might get injured or trip and fall. Normally the *battle*is won by *warriors*(literally “mighty”)*.*But *time and chance*can intervene. Sometimes the *battle*is decided by the spread of a disease. Normally the *wise* are really good at producing *wealth*and income. But the *wise*don’t always reap *bread* or material needs. Sometimes events like famine or war intervene and neutralize their wisdom. *Wealth* is usually amassed by people who are shrewd investors. But sometimes events overtake even the *discerning* (literally, “understanding”). *Time and chance*is a power that sometimes swamps our capabilities. Just as death is inevitable, so is *time and chance—*or events.

Normally *men of ability*gain the most *favor*. That*favor* might come in the form of awards or recognition. It might manifest itself in the form of success. But sometimes events, *time and chance,*overtake *ability.*We cannot control outcomes in this life. So all the more important to live for eternity; in eternity the negative impact of death, *time, and chance*are replaced with the certainty of God’s reign on a new earth.

**Biblical Text:**  
**11I again saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift and the battle is not to the warriors, and neither is bread to the wise nor wealth to the discerning nor favor to men of ability; for time and chance overtake them all.12Moreover, man does not know his time: like fish caught in a treacherous net and birds trapped in a snare, so the sons of men are ensnared at an evil time when it suddenly falls on them.**