

# The End of the Matter – Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes 7:15-29

"The Limits of Wisdom" – November 3, 2019



## Introduction

Part of being made in the image of God ([Gen. 1:26-27](#)) is our thirst for knowledge: to understand, build, and create. Wisdom is a good thing...but when Adam and Eve ate the fruit in the Garden of Eden thinking it would make them *like God*, such that they could replace their need for God with enough information, things fell apart. In answering the question of what is good for man to do in a world subjected to futility ([Ecc. 6:12](#)), the Preacher calls us to pursue wisdom, but to accept its limitations.

## Pray

Before you begin, take some time to ask God to help you understand His word, to reveal what needs to change in you, and for the grace to follow Him in response. To help, use [Psalm 119:33-40](#) as a prayer for God to open His word up to you.

## Sermon Outline

- I. When life doesn't make sense, fear God, not man (7:15-22)
- II. Accept the limits of wisdom and embrace God, as God (vv23-29)

## Read & Discuss

1) Read [Ecclesiastes 7:15-22](#)

If God is sovereign, good and powerful ([7:14](#)), how are we to understand the times when the wicked prosper and righteous suffer? It's a challenging and often *painful* question and in our effort to understand, the Preacher knows we are at risk of falling into one of two ditches: 1) thinking we weren't righteous *enough* and need to turn up our religious efforts so God will owe us good ([7:16](#)) or 2) despairing, thinking that being righteous is vanity, and choosing to escape by indulging in sin ([7:17](#)). Instead, the way through this difficult question is through the fear of God ([7:18](#)) – to know, love, and trust God.

As an example of this, the Preacher reminds us of the universality of sin ([7:20](#)). With that in mind, he reminds us that when we hear others criticize us or curse us, we should not take it to heart knowing we ourselves have done the same. That's not to excuse the evil speech of the that person, but he tempers our response by reminding us to step out from any self-righteousness and have some humility that comes from seeing ourselves accurately. Do you find yourself easily offended? Do you tend to take to heart the painful comments of others? [Click here for a great follow up article on receiving criticism as a Christian by Alfred Poirier.](#)

Additional Reading: Psalm 73

2) Read [Ecclesiastes 7:23-29](#)

Wisdom is beneficial ([7:19](#)), but has its limits. When we ignore those limits and seek to find the answers too deep for us because we're desperate for control, we are likely seeking a God-replacement wisdom. What are ways that you seek to know things in order to lean on what you know instead of trusting in God (see [Prov. 3:5](#))?

Although the Preacher knew some things were too deep for him he went looking anyways and then turns around to warn us where it leads: *a wickedness that cannot be escaped* (v26) and *an equation that cannot be solved* (v27-28). What does Paul say about our wisdom in [1 Corinthians 1:24](#) and [1:30](#)? How does seeing the goal of wisdom culminating in the person of Jesus Christ change the way we seek for and approach wisdom?

Additional Reading: John 8:34, Hebrews 11:6

**Prayer of Response**

1) After hearing God's Word, what sin do I need to *confess*? From what do I need to *repent*?

2) How should my life be lived this week based on what I have heard? What should I *understand, believe, desire, or do*?

Spend time praying together in response to God's word asking for His help and greater faith to follow Him in the week to come.

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| <b>*Next week's sermon text:</b> we turn to <b>Ecclesiastes 8 :1-17 "Fearing God in a sin-sick world"</b> |
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