

The End of the Matter – Ecclesiastes

Ecclesiastes 8:1-17

“Fearing God in a sin-sick world” – November 10, 2019



Introduction

Wisdom is beneficial to those who walk by the light it provides. As Proverbs 3:13–14 says “Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding, for the gain from her is better than gain from silver and her profit better than gold.” Wisdom helps us to steer clear of life’s pitfalls? Why? Because, “the Lord by wisdom founded the earth” (Proverbs 3:19). And yet, part of being wise is knowing that wisdom has limits. There are some things in life we cannot find out no matter how hard we search. Learning to rest and enjoy the life God gives us means coming to accept those limits and trust Him ([Proverbs 3:5](#)).

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. Use wisdom to navigate life's dangers (8:1-10)
- II. Accept the limits of wisdom to enjoy your supper (8:11-17)

Read & Discuss

- 1) Read [Ecclesiastes 8:1-10](#)

To show the benefits of wisdom, the Preacher paints a scenario of an officer working in the king’s court. How are we to respond when those in charge leave us asking, “What are you doing? What are you thinking?” (see [v4](#)). The Preacher maps out two responses: we should obey the king’s command (v2) but when obeying the one in authority means disobeying our ultimate loyalty to God our King, we should leave, but do so slowly (v3). Authority is seen by many today as something to be questioned and challenged...but Scripture says that all authority belongs to God ([Romans 13:1](#)) and when we can, we should honor and obey. How might our submission to such borrowed authority reflect our trust in God to a watching world?

In the instances that the command of those in charge is foolish or demands we disobey God (see Acts 5:29), there are instances when we need to leave in order to obey God. Take a moment to look at [Romans 12:17-21](#). What do we learn about the way we should respond? When it comes time to make a decision that weighs ‘heavy’ on us; when we don’t know what tomorrow holds and we lack the power to change things ([vv6-8](#)), we are to look to God who *does* know and *is* in control (see [James 1:5](#))

Additional Reading: Romans 13:1-8, 1 Peter 2:13-18

2) Read [Ecclesiastes 8:11-17](#)

In this section, we're reminded of the limits of wisdom. Again we face the perplexing question of why good things happen to bad people and bad things happen to good people in v14. Though God does not tell us the details of the mysteries behind the scenes ([Deuteronomy 29:29](#)), He does tell us how things end in [vv12-13](#). How does the death of the wicked bring hope and help to those waiting for justice? How does the promise of a coming judgement ([2 Peter 3:8-13](#)) help us to wait and motivate us to holy living?

How can our enjoying the gifts that God gives today an expression of trust in God and not an expression of cynicism that has given up hope (see [v15](#))? Compare [v14](#) with [Isaiah 53:4-6](#). How does the good news of a Savior being willing to die for our sin and rise again help us trust God and deal with the perplexing questions of life?

Additional Reading: Romans 2:4-5

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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*Next week's sermon text: we turn to Ecclesiastes 9:1-12 "Enjoy Life God has Given"
