

Ecclesiastes– Understanding in Uncertainty and Unfairness

Ecclesiastes 8:1-9:10

“We pursue being a disciple making family: surrendered to Jesus, transformed by the gospel, and saturated in His word.”

The Teacher is forcing us to deal with the realities of life under the sun. There is much that can happen in the course of our day or over the course of our life. It is very easy to be overwhelmed by the fear or anxiety of what could happen or what has happened. In a 24-hour news cycle and a constant social media feed, we can be inundated with the real time realities of life in a broken world. In this text we see how wisdom helps us deal with uncertainties, unfairness, and ultimately death. Solomon leads us through several practical areas where wisdom is needed. He points out that the answer to all of these anxieties is found in fearing God and enjoying the life that God has given us.

Discussion Questions -- do not feel the pressure to cover them all

1. The Teacher points out that we are to keep the king's command because of God's oath to him. We see throughout Scripture, like Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17, that God has placed the government and other authorities over us. It's true none of us like authority until we are in authority. This is a result of the fall of man and this human nature is seen early in little children. How does the Teacher point out that we should respond to this governmental authority? How should we respond to any authority? There is a caution to remember our God-given place in regard to this authority. How do we see this done well among Christians, and where do we see this done poorly? Why is this such a difficulty? How do you do with honoring the authorities in your life? What justifications do you use to make your dishonor acceptable? (i.e. they are not as educated or experienced as I am, they are not as gifted as I am, they have not been here as long as I have, they are younger, etc.)
2. The Teacher gives the point to the wise to pick your battles and not exasperate your authority with non-stop opinions and personal critiques. In this case in Ecclesiastes, the king does not have to entertain anyone, but Solomon gives a way to go about influencing the king. There is a time for everything, even if the matter is heavy on the heart of someone, Solomon points out patience and encourages to seek wisdom for God's time to speak. How have you seen this work in your own life in regard to the authority over you? How did you handle the rejection of your idea or opinions? What should you do if it never goes the way you think it should? When are clear times that one should not follow the kingly authority and should follow the higher authority of God? (i.e. unbiblical, unethical, immoral, illegal, etc.) How have you experienced this in your own life?
3. The Teacher points out that it is extremely frustrating to see the wicked be celebrated or praised for a life that was wicked. Their injustice may not have

been punished speedily enough or it may seem that they got away with everything. We see here that the righteous and the wicked will get their due rewards from God. How do we find resolve and comfort in this? How have you struggled with this in your own life?

4. We see in this text that the uncertainties of everyday life and the unknown timing of our death can impact us all. The Teacher tells us that the answer to the uncertainties, the unfairness, and to ultimately death is to fear God and enjoy the life that God has given us. It is his gift to us. How is this really possible? He's not saying to live a hedonistic and self-indulgent life but to live in honor of God. We know the rest of the story with the good news of the gospel of Jesus. How does the gospel play into our ability to fear God and enjoy this life?
5. Our lives will never be free from uncertainties, unfairness, and death until we close our eyes in death. This means we may be mistreated, we may be lonely, we may be broke, we may have cancer, we may be overcome with grief, but we can still enjoy our life as a gift from God. When do you find it most difficult to enjoy this life under the sun? How can the gospel impact this struggle?

Who do you know today that needs the good news of the gospel of Jesus? Take some time and pray for them. They are wrestling with everything we have studied today.