

Life under Authority

Ecclesiastes 8:1-17

1. Introduction.
 - a. Brief review.
 - b. In chapter 7 Solomon showed hebel was not merely external, but also internal to every person.
2. V. 1– A general statement on the nature of wisdom.
 - a. Functions as a transition between chapters 7 and 8.
 - b. 1a – The rhetorical question is drawing attention to the rarity of wisdom.
 - c. 1b – The imagery of illumination is a reference to what true wisdom actually does to a person.
 - i. The point is that wisdom actually affects a person’s life.
 - ii. Wisdom brings a kind of countenance that allows a person to experience calmness, but especially joy, in the midst of the unknown circumstances of life.
3. V. 2— Authority established.
 - a. The command – Obey and submit to your rulers.
 - b. The reason – God has established the authorities.
 - i. This reason for obedience is not an issue of pragmatics, but an issue of principle.
 - ii. Roman 13:1.
 - iii. 1Peter 2:13-14.
 - c. The point is that the people of God, regardless of circumstances, are never to be known as insurrections. God has placed all authority into power, and He has placed them there to rule.

4. V. 3— Solomon’s warning against rebellion, conspiracy, and revolution.
5. V. 4— Unopposed authority.
 - a. Regardless of the kind of authority, to some degree or another, all authority is broken in this life.
 - b. The implication is that no amount of injustice or unrighteousness among governing authorities makes their authority void.
6. V. 5— The appropriate posture for life under authority.
 - a. A trouble free life comes to those who adhere to the demands of the law.
 - b. Those who don’t adhere to the demands of the law will often experience the “evil” that comes from the so-called justice of a corrupt justice system.
7. V. 6— Wisdom for navigating life under authority.
 - a. “A proper time and procedure” is a phrase in reference to how a person under authority should address the injustices of those in authority. There’s an appropriate way to act and speak about the injustices that won’t incite the wrath of those authorities.
 - b. The “wise heart.”
 - i. In Hebrew thought, “heart” is a term in reference to that which controls a person.
 - ii. Solomon’s point is that a person’s passions, even if they’re for just causes, must be controlled by wisdom.
8. V. 7— No amount of right action, even when all the procedures are followed, will guarantee a righteous outcome. The reason for this is because the world is broken—this is the hebel.
9. V. 8— Do not respond to evil with evil (i.e., take justice into your own hands). The point is that justice has not been truly served unless it’s been carried out by God’s established authority and means.
10. Vss. 9-10— Solomon’s observation.
 - a. The hypocrisy of authority.

- b. The hebel is that those in authority use their authority for personal gain. Those who've been established by God to bring about justice, often use their authority to act out their own injustice.
- 11. V. 11— The slowness with which justice is brought can function as a motivator for the wicked to act out more evil.
- 12. Vss. 12-14— Solomon's warning to those who do evil.
 - a. Momentary freedom and prosperity doesn't negate the reality of future judgement.
 - b. Romans 1:18.
- 13. Vss. 15-17— Solomon's Conclusion.
 - a. A wise person doesn't seek for joy and contentment in the injustices being made right, but in the details and gifts of life (cf. 2:24-26; 3:22).

Small Group Questions:

1. What stood out to you in this sermon?
2. List all the areas of authority in your life. In ways do you perhaps struggle to view some of them as having been established by God?
3. List all the areas in which you possess authority in your life. In what ways have you perhaps grown lax in your responsibilities (e.g., within your home, work, etc.)?
4. How is Christ the ultimate solution to the injustices of this world?