

February 26, 2017

## “Being Under Authority”

### Focal Passage: Ecclesiastes 8:1-17 (NASB)

Cross References: Psalms 37 and 73; Matthew 6:25-34; 22:19-21; Acts 4:18-20; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17

**Lesson Idea:** If we are wise, we will submit to the authorities in our lives and live under the fear of God while enjoying the life only He can give.

#### BIBLE IN A YEAR READING PLAN

Feb 19 Numbers 18-20	Feb 20 Numbers 21-22
Feb 21 Numbers 23-25	Feb 22 Numbers 26-27
Feb 23 Numbers 28-30	Feb 24 Numbers 31-32
Feb 25 Numbers 33-34	Feb 26 Numbers 35-36

#### Background:

With the unrest in our society concerning the political atmosphere of new leadership, Christians would do well to consider the words of the Lord through Solomon. In a free nation, it is easy to be rebellious and consider our own standards as supreme. God has instituted authority, and we would be wise to acknowledge and respect that authority, but only to the extent where it does not compromise our ultimate allegiance to the Supreme Authority.

#### Ecclesiastes 8:1-17

*1 Who is like the wise man and who knows the interpretation of a matter? A man's wisdom illumines him and causes his stern face to beam.*

*2 I say, "Keep the command of the king because of the oath before God. 3 Do not be in a hurry to leave him. Do not join in an evil matter, for he will do whatever he pleases." 4 Since the word of the king is authoritative, who will say to him, "What are you doing?"*

*5 He who keeps a royal command experiences no trouble, for a wise heart knows the proper time and procedure. 6 For there is a proper time and procedure for every delight, though a man's trouble is heavy upon him. 7 If no one knows what will happen, who can tell him when it will happen? 8 No man has authority to restrain the wind with the wind, or authority over the day of death; and there is no discharge in the time of war, and evil will not deliver those who practice it. 9 All this I have*

*seen and applied my mind to every deed that has been done under the sun wherein a man has exercised authority over another man to his hurt.*

*10 So then, I have seen the wicked buried, those who used to go in and out from the holy place, and they are soon forgotten in the city where they did thus. This too is futility. 11 Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed quickly, therefore the hearts of the sons of men among them are given fully to do evil. 12 Although a sinner does evil a hundred times and may lengthen his life, still I know that it will be well for those who fear God, who fear Him openly. 13 But it will not be well for the evil man and he will not lengthen his days like a shadow, because he does not fear God.*

*14 There is futility which is done on the earth, that is, there are righteous men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked. On the other hand, there are evil men to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I say that this too is futility. 15 So I commended pleasure, for there is nothing good for a man under the sun except to eat and to drink and to be merry, and this will stand by him in his toils throughout the days of his life which God has given him under the sun.*

*16 When I gave my heart to know wisdom and to see the task which has been done on the earth (even though one should never sleep day or night), 17 and I saw every work of God, I concluded that man cannot discover the work which has been done under the sun. Even though man should seek laboriously, he will not discover; and though the wise man should say, "I know," he cannot discover.*

#### DISCUSSION:

- V 1. Why does wisdom cause even a stern person's "face to beam?" How do we gain wisdom and insight? (see James 1:5-6)

#### NOTE: from David Guzik:

*"The shining face generally speaks of favour (cf. Numbers 6:25). Here it speaks of the wise man who is visibly gracious in his demeanour, and (as the next phrase says) whose gentleness is obvious in his facial expression."* (Eaton)

- v 2-5. How should people in America (where there is no king) apply these verses? Read

Romans 13:1-7. Why does God put people in authority? What is our responsibility towards them? (see also Matthew 22:19-21; Acts 4:18-20; 1 Peter 2:13-17)

**NOTE:** from Guzik:

***Keep the king's commandment for the sake of your oath to God:*** The Preacher understood what the Apostle Paul would later write in Romans 13:1-14 – that we should obey government authority as part of our obedience to God.

We do this primarily not to honor the king or government authority (though this is part of our obligation). Primarily, we honor government authority for the sake of our oath to God. In a New Covenant context, we do it as part of our obedience to God.

We also recognize that we are always to obey God rather than man if the two contradict (Acts 4:19). “Many passages in the Old Testament witness to the limits which loyalty to God must set on courtly tact and submissiveness.” (Kidner)

This also makes us reflect on our obedience to God as the Great King.

- v 6. How is there a “proper time and procedure for every delight?” (see Ecclesiastes 3:1-11) How does this truth help during times when “trouble is heavy” upon you?
- v 7. What was Solomon’s view about the future? (see Matthew 6:25-34)
- v 8-9. Over what things does no one have authority? How does Solomon apply this to how people exercise their authority in this life?
- v 10. What ultimately happens to wicked people?

- v 11. What happens when justice does not come quickly in the courts? How should we pray for our law enforcement and court systems?
- v 12-13. How does Solomon contrast those who do evil with those who fear God? Why do righteous people sometimes struggle with envy of the ungodly? (see David’s struggle in Psalm 73. See also Psalm 37) What will ultimately happen to the wicked?
- v 14. What futility did Solomon notice on earth? Why do the righteous often suffer more than the wicked? How does that affect your faith?
- v 15. What does Solomon conclude about life under the sun? Who is the Giver of life? How should that affect the way we live?
- v 16-17. What is it that we cannot discover about life under the sun? What should this lack of knowledge lead us to do?

**APPLICATION:**

- ✓ How do you submit to the authorities in your life?
- ✓ How do you acknowledge God’s ultimate authority over your life?