

Just a Breath | Government

Ecclesiastes 8:1-15

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*Who is like the wise?
And who knows the interpretation of a thing?
A man's wisdom makes his face shine,
and the hardness of his face is changed.*

—Ecclesiastes 8:1

I. **Necessary Acknowledgements**

a. No government is perfect.

b. We will never fully agree with those who govern.

c. Our attitude towards government matters to God.

*But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those
who persecute you,*

—Matthew 5:44

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse
them.*

—Romans 12:14

*Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is
honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it
depends on you, live peaceably with all.*

—Romans 12:17-18

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

—Romans 12:21

II. **Relating Biblically to Government (Ecclesiastes 8:1-9)**

I say: Keep the king's command, because of God's oath to him.

—Ecclesiastes 8:2

a. God calls us to obedience. (8:2-4; Daniel 2:21, 37-38; Rom. 13:1; Col. 3:23)

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,

—Colossians 3:23

Be not hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand in an evil cause, for he does whatever he pleases.

—Ecclesiastes 8:3

For the word of the king is supreme, and who may say to him, "What are you doing?"

—Ecclesiastes 8:4

*He changes times and seasons;
he removes kings and sets up kings...*

—Daniel 2:21a

You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, 38 and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all

—Daniel 2:37-38a

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.

—Romans 13:1

"...We must obey God rather than men.

—Acts 5:29b

Whoever keeps a command will know no evil thing, and

*the wise heart will know the proper time and the just way.
6 For there is a time and a way for everything, although
man's trouble lies heavy on him.*

—Ecclesiastes 8:5-6

b. Always be wise in your dealings with government. (8:5-7)

*For he does not know what is to be, for who can tell him
how it will be?*

—Ecclesiastes 8:7

*No man has power to retain the spirit, or power over the
day of death. There is no discharge from war, nor will
wickedness deliver those who are given to it.*

—Ecclesiastes 8:8

c. Government has authority but it isn't final. (8:8-9)

*All this I observed while applying my heart to all that is
done under the sun, when man had power over man to his
hurt.*

—Ecclesiastes 8:9

III. Final Encouragements (Ecclesiastes 8:10-17)

*Then I saw the wicked buried. They used to go in and out
of the holy place and were praised in the city where they
had done such things. This also is vanity.*

—Ecclesiastes 8:10

*Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed
speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do
evil.*

—Ecclesiastes 8:11

a. Justice delayed is not justice denied. (8:10-11)

b. God will one day right every wrong. (8:12-14; Heb. 9:27; 1 Tim.2:1-6)

Though a sinner does evil a hundred times and prolongs his life, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they fear before him. 13 But it will not be well with the wicked, neither will he prolong his days like a shadow, because he does not fear before God.

14 There is a vanity that takes place on earth, that there are righteous people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the wicked, and there are wicked people to whom it happens according to the deeds of the righteous. I said that this also is vanity.

—Ecclesiastes 8:12-14

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment

—Hebrews 9:27

For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all...

—1 Timothy 2:5-6a

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all...

—1 Timothy 2:1-6a

And I commend joy, for man has nothing better under the

sun but to eat and drink and be joyful, for this will go with him in his toil through the days of his life that God has given him under the sun.

—*Ecclesiastes 8:15*

c. Fear God and enjoy your life. (8:15-17; Rom. 2:24)

When I applied my heart to know wisdom, and to see the business that is done on earth, how neither day nor night do one's eyes see sleep, then I saw all the work of God, that man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking, he will not find it out. Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out.

—*Ecclesiastes 8:16-17*

For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

—*Romans 2:24*

Study Questions

1. When you think about the state of our country today, what words come to mind? Identify a few words and share those with your group. Explain why you chose these words to describe the state of things. Also, describe your greatest challenge to submitting to the governing authorities. If you find it difficult to obey them, explain why.
2. Compare **Ecclesiastes 8:1-9** to **Romans 13:1-7**. What insights do Paul's words (Romans 13) provide to what Solomon writes (Eccl. 8)? Be specific. From both passages, explain what you find most difficult to understand as it pertains to our relationship to government. If applicable, discuss how you've personally had to wrestle through these struggles. What has God taught you in the process?
3. Nowhere are we told that we will always agree with the government's decisions or policies; however, we're still commanded to submit to them. This creates a tension for every

disciple of Jesus. Spend some time discussing the importance of our relationship with those in authority over us and how our relationship to government can either be a great testimony to our faith (or) a damaging testimony.

4. Reflect on Paul's words in **1 Timothy 2:1-6**. What does this teach us about God's heart in commanding us to pray for those in "high positions"? Close out by praying specifically for those in positions of governmental leadership. Ask for God's grace in helping us conduct ourselves so that our lives, actions, and speech point people to Jesus rather than push from them away from Him.