

ECCLESIASTES

everything is vapour

Part 10 | Growing in Wisdom



Ecclesiastes 8:1-17 (ESV)

March 22, 2020

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.

²I say: Keep the king's command, because of God's oath to him. ³Be not hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand in an evil cause, for he does whatever he pleases. ⁴For the word of the king is supreme, and who may say to him, "What are you doing?" ⁵Whoever keeps a command will know no evil thing, and the wise heart will know the proper time and the just way. ⁶For there is a time and a way for everything, although man's trouble lies heavy on him. ⁷For he does not know what is to be, for who can tell him how it will be? ⁸No 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. ⁹All this I observed while applying my heart to all that is done under the sun, when man had power over man to his hurt.

¹⁰Then 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. *

* English Standard Version translator's note: The Hebrew term *hebel*, translated vanity or vain, refers concretely to a "mist," "vapor," or "mere breath," and metaphorically to something that is fleeting or elusive (with different nuances depending on the context).

Introduction

1. **Grow in wisdom by learning how to relate to those in authority, even when they abuse their power.**

a. _____ those in authority

"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. ² Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. . . . ⁶ For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. ⁷ Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed." Romans 13:1-7

¹¹ Because the sentence against an evil deed is not executed speedily, the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil. ¹² 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.*

¹⁵ 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.

¹⁶ 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, ¹⁷ 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.

“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.”

1 Timothy 2:1-2

b. Use caution when those in authority act in _____ ways

“Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”

Matthew 10:16

Why were the early Christians persecuted?

a. Christian claims about Jesus were viewed as _____

b. Misunderstandings about Christian beliefs gave Christians a poor _____

c. The non-participation of Christians in key areas of society was viewed as a _____ to the civil order

d. Christian values on the sanctity of _____ and the sanctity of _____ were at odds with Roman culture

“Only God do we worship but in other things we joyfully obey you, acknowledging you as the kings and rulers of men. . . . [Christians are] moral, upright, and law-abiding citizens who are the empire’s best allies in securing good order.” —Justin Martyr (died 165AD)

2. Grow in wisdom by learning how to relate to God, even when he seems unfair.

a. It will not end well for those who _____ fear God

b. It *will* end well for those who _____ fear God

3. Grow in wisdom by learning how to relate to circumstances, even when you can’t figure them all out.

a. Accept the fact that you cannot figure out the _____ for every circumstance.

b. Enjoy the _____ circumstances God has given you.