



Ecclesiastes 8:10-17

Developing an eternal perspective regarding good and evil

People appear to get away with wickedness, but God holds them accountable (8:10-13)

- *“Then I saw the wicked buried.”* - Solomon saw the funerals of evil and corrupt people
- *“They used to go in and out of the holy place and were praised in the city where they had done such things.”*
- *“go in and out of the holy place”* – they attended religious services and made their prescribed offerings (today we say they attended church and made financial contributions)
- *“praised in the city where they had done such things”* – the ESV uses the word *“praised”* where some manuscripts have a word meaning *“forgotten”*
 - They were either quickly forgotten, or more likely they were successful in carrying out the masquerade that duped people into saying they were good people
 - 2 Timothy 3:12–13
 - Deceived people are religious, not broken and contrite before God
 - Matthew 7:21–23
 - Religious activity does not atone for the worldliness of self-centeredness
- *“This also is vanity”* – evil people putting on a religious charade is yet another manifestation of earthly emptiness

People appear to get away with wickedness, but God holds them accountable (8:10-13)

“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.”

- When trials and restitution are delayed, evil people and evil deeds increase
- Such delays are the result of man-centeredness rather than God-centeredness
- *“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.”*
- Wisdom inspires Solomon to remind people who honor and fear God rather than man
 - Psalm 37:1–2
 - Psalm 37:8b–9
- To fear God means to live life with consistent awareness of His presence, power, and provision
- No one will escape the justice of God
- All evil doers are accountable for their evil ways and will experience eternal punishment rather than eternal peace and blessing
 - Revelation 20:11–12

Righteous people experience affliction in life, but they should find joy in life (8:14-15)

“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.”

- Solomon acknowledges inequities he witnessed in life
 - There are times when good and godly people seem to encounter hardship like they are wicked people
 - There are also times when wicked people skate through life without hardship and even appear to be prospering due to their wickedness
- If all we have is this life as means of evaluation, our lives could become filled with consternation and exasperation

Righteous people experience affliction in life, but they should find joy in life (8:14-15)

“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.”

- Rather than succumbing anxiety and exasperation, God’s people need to trust His presence, power, and provision, and choose joy
- To live in frustration and fear is a failure to commit your way to God and trust His purposes
- Choosing joy is in line with the instructions Solomon previous gives in the address of Ecclesiastes
 - Ecclesiastes 2:24–26
 - Ecclesiastes 3:12–13
 - Ecclesiastes 3:22
 - Ecclesiastes 5:18–20
- Asking God to give us genuine, consistent joy is a prayer we should frequently offer
- Gospel grace in Jesus reveals the same prayerful pursuit of joy in all circumstances
 - Philippians 4:4–7
- Hearts of joyful worship are glorious gifts of God that are ours for the asking

Man's work is exhausting, but the work of God is incomprehensible (8:16-17)

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.

- The pursuit of wisdom and doing our daily tasks are exhausting endeavors
 - Life is full of challenges and confusion
 - We will spend many sleepless nights attempting to figure out what God says we cannot know
 - Deuteronomy 29:29
 - Romans 11:33–34
 - God determines that human insight and understanding have their limits
- Life is filled with mysteries kept in the shadows by God's design and God's glory

God Moves in a Mysterious Way

William Cowper, 1774

- God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea
And rides upon the storm.
- Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never-failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs
And works His sov'reign will.
- Ye fearful saints, fresh courage
take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy and shall break
In blessings on your head.
- Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.
- His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flow'r.
- Blind unbelief is sure to err
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

Questions to Consider

- In what ways is it reassuring to know that God holds the wicked to account and they will one day face Him as their judge?
- How consistently and worshipfully conscious are you of God's presence, power, and provision?
- What should you do when you find yourself living with frustration and fear?
- What is the solution to the problem of thinking you should understand the mysteries of life that are perplexing you at any particular time?



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