

The Many "Faces" of Wisdom

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[0 : 00] rehearsing the chorus especially, I thought Solomon would sing this song because that's a lot of what Solomon's been telling us in the book of Ecclesiastes. I'll ask you to turn there, Ecclesiastes 8.

We've been marching through this wonderful book of the Old Testament, a book of wisdom, wisdom literature. We believe that Solomon wrote this particular book of the Bible.

And we are excited about the ways that we're being challenged and convicted in the Lord as we listen to Solomon toward the end of his life, look back on his life, and instead of just simply get thrown into a pity party and live full of regret, God inspires him through the power of the Holy Spirit to pen these words for our benefit and say, don't make the same mistakes I made.

Let me allow you to listen to an older man talk to you about what it means to make life the most you can make of it.

To find the true meaning and purpose of living this life that God has given us. That's what we've been dealing with as we've gone back and forth through this particular book of the Bible.

[1 : 28] Just say, are we going to have slides? Yeah, it's going to work. All right. Well, let me tell you this. As we move through Ecclesiastes together, we want to keep in mind the big picture of the book. So here's the main point Solomon makes as he looks back on his life to reflect on the meaning of life.

All right. Let's throw that up there for him. I don't know if you can see it. I'll read it out for you. The main point is that finding purpose in life apart from God is futile.

The things of this world, pleasure, work, achievement, possessions, friends, etc. are all meaningless when pursued as ends unto themselves.

True purpose and joy in life is found in God. Now, you would expect a preacher to say something like that, but this is something that we all can subscribe to in the way of living in the wisdom of the Lord.

We understand, thank God, that in our salvation in Jesus Christ, God is teaching us to live a life pleasing to him. It's a process. None of us are saved and then automatically find ourselves knowing everything we need to know about what it means to please the Lord.

[2 : 45] We are in a process by grace through faith in Christ alone of learning to live life to glorify God. This is what this book is all about. Now, Solomon now accepts and understands all of this, but his struggle throughout his life has been along two primary lines.

Here's the first. First of all, he struggled with this. He has seen those who do not, do not seek to honor God actually prosper in life and enjoy life.

While those who do seek to honor God seem to suffer under all kinds of various adversities. And to Solomon, looking back, he says this seems unfair and unbalanced, especially in light of the main point Solomon is making throughout Ecclesiastes.

Life is meaningless, lived apart from the Lord. So when you live with the Lord, it's meaningful. And yet I see this going on. What in the world? How do I reconcile that with what I know to be true?

The second thing he struggled with through his life is this. Life is fleeting and full of change. Listen to this. Unpredictable, seemingly meaningless, random, and oftentimes life-altering change.

[4 : 12] And he wants to know what is that all about? Where is a sovereign God in light of all of the change that happens in my life?

There's stuff I don't see coming and then it's there. Where's God in that? This is Solomon. Now keep in mind, as I've told you throughout this book, Solomon is the wisest man who's ever walked the face of the earth other than three other people.

Adam, Eve, and Jesus. Adam and Eve, at least before sin, right? The wisest people on the earth, Adam, Eve, and Jesus, Solomon follows in that vein.

And he is struggling with these different issues of his life. His issue here is how this is beyond his understanding and finding out.

I've tried to apply my mind to these different things and I just, even in my wisdom, I can't search it all out and I can't make sense of it all.

[5 : 14] The why, the when, the where, the what, the how of God working in the matters of life are beyond human discovery and beyond the full understanding of any person.

Now we saw this expressed in my last two messages and at the end of chapter 7, if you would look at 7, verse 23.

Just rehearse this with me. Solomon says, I tested all of this, everything that he'd been talking about, and we covered this in a previous message. I tested it all with wisdom.

And I said, I will be wise, but notice it was far from me. What has been is remote and exceedingly mysterious.

Who can discover it? I directed my mind to know, to investigate, to seek wisdom and an explanation and to know the evil of folly and the foolishness of madness.

[6 : 17] Drop down to verse 29 and you'll see the result. Behold, here's what I found. I found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices.

So a lot of good it didn't, right? At the end of the day, or more accurately, in the words of Solomon, when all has been heard, what matters most about the matters of life is this.

I'll throw this up on the screen for you if you can see it. I'm sorry that it's a little small. We'll have that fixed for next week. Fear God, keep his commandments, because this applies to every person, for God will bring every act of judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.

That's Ecclesiastes 12, 12 and 13. So in light of this truth, how would people, do you think, around the world, especially I'm thinking Christians, especially Christians, how would they sum up what matters most about the matters of life?

If you found a place in our community where a lot of people are coming and going and you got your clipboard and you went out there and this was your question, how would you, sir, or ma'am, how would you sum up what matters most about the matters of life?

[7 : 40] I just wonder what kind of answers you'd get. And I wonder if you were able to ask, are you a Christian? Do you consider yourself a Christian and then record their answer? I wonder what kind of answers you'd get from Christians.

I wonder what they'd say. Well, I'll tell you, if they've read Ecclesiastes and have any memory of it, they ought to go right to what we just read and said, here's what matters most about life, the matters of life.

Fear God and keep his commandments. Right? Solomon sums it all up. That's where we're headed. We're, God willing, we're going to get through the eighth chapter today and we'll have about four more left for us to deal with.

But at the very end, I've already let the cat out of the bag. That's what he says the end product is, right? That's what we're all about. So if you'll look at this particular quote I want to put up here for you.

Identify your own personal earthly vanities. I'm going to call these this, your earthly empties. What I mean by that is your idols, the idols you're living for and take prayerful measure.

[8 : 48] Now hear that carefully, folks, prayerful measure of them in light of the fear of the Lord. And your own mortality. This is the this is the heartbeat of what Solomon is telling.

I'm going to read it one more time. Identify your own personal earthly vanities, their earthly empties and take prayerful measure of those things in light of the fear of the Lord and your own mortality.

That is your impending death. Solomon wants you to embrace that finding purpose in life apart from God is futile. It's empty. It's illusory.

And that living with and for God is the only true path to true purpose and genuine fulfillment in life. Now, that sounds obvious, but it's not. That's why I'm saying to you in that quote, you need to take a prayerful measure of your heart.

The only way for you to do that is to apply the wisdom of God to it. Your heart is deceitful. It'll fool you. Your desires are deceitful. They'll fool you.

[9 : 48] They'll lead you astray. We can rationalize, justify just about anything in our lives, can't we? But applying the wisdom of God to our heart and taking a humble, prayerful approach, a submissive approach to this in the wisdom of God will help us search out by the power of the Holy Spirit any way that would be wicked in us.

And then we can deal with it. We can repent of it. Look, we can't repent of what we don't know. So we need God to help us search it out. That's what I'm talking about. That's what Solomon is saying we need to engage in.

This is not navel gazing. This is not some weird introspective thing where you light candles and sit around and expect some weird ethereal thing to come on you and now you understand the meaning of life.

No, we know the meaning of life. You're here to glorify God. So that's what we need to be concerned with as we deal with the wisdom of the Lord.

The title of my message, The Many Faces of Wisdom. The Many Faces of Wisdom. Let's read Ecclesiastes 8 together.

[11 : 00] 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 or to shine, to radiate.

I say, keep the command of the king because of the oath before God. Do not be in a hurry to leave him. Do not join in an evil matter for he will do whatever he pleases.

That is the king. Since the word of the king is authoritative, who will say to him, what are you doing? No, he who keeps a royal command experiences no trouble for a wise heart knows the proper time and procedure.

For there is a proper time and procedure for every delight. Though a man's trouble is heavy upon him. If no one knows what will happen, who can tell him when it will happen.

No man has authority then to restrain the wind with the wind or authority over the day of his death. There is no discharge in the time of war and evil, evil will not deliver those who practice it.

[12 : 04] 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 who is hurt.

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 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.

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. 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.

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.

[13 : 09] I say this too is futility. 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.

I wonder, did you know that was in the Bible? And this will stand by him in his toils throughout the days of his life which God has given him under the sun.

So, 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 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.

Now, to me, you first read this it just sounds like this guy is all over the place. it's like, yeah, I can tell he doesn't have a clue because this makes no sense. Well, hang on.

Hang on. As we look at this together Solomon helps us apply some of the many faces of godly wisdom in two primary realms in which each one of us live and move and have our being.

[14 : 32] Right? The first realm that we're going to apply some of the faces of wisdom in according to Solomon Ecclesiastes 8 is this godly wisdom applied to earthly authority verses 2 through 9.

Godly wisdom applied to earthly authority. You see that up here. And the very first thing that we'll deal with under this particular realm is the face of discretion.

You see that up here on the screen as well. The face of discretion or wise judgment in verses 2 through 6. I say keep the command of the king because of the oath before God.

Do not be in a hurry to leave him. Do not join in an evil matter for he will do whatever he pleases. Since the word of the king is authoritative who will say to him what are you doing? He who keeps a royal command experiences no trouble for a wise heart knows the proper time and procedure.

There is a proper time and procedure for every delight though a man's trouble is heavy upon him. I want to give you a quick cross reference before we jump more into what we're going to talk about.

[15 : 41] Proverbs 8 12 or excuse me. Yeah, Proverbs 8 12. We read this earlier for our call to worship. Proverbs 8 12.

I want you to think about this as we move through this section of Ecclesiastes 8. Proverbs 8 12 says I wisdom dwell with notice prudence and I find knowledge and discretion.

The very next verse the fear of the Lord is to hate evil. Wisdom dwells with prudence, knowledge and discretion and all of these combined to help us grow in the fear of the Lord.

Now, what does that mean? We'll throw this up here for you. Discretion. The next line discretion. Wise judgment helps you patiently pause, prayerfully ponder and prudently promote God's truth in the matters of life.

Now, this is important. I want to put this up here for you to see. Patiently pause, prayerfully ponder and prudently promote truth in the matters of life.

[16 : 59] The idea here is that you will apply godly discretion in your relationship to any and to all expressions of earthly authority. So discretion is the character quality of wise, objective judgment in the matters of life.

You say, Jeff, pause, patiently pause, prayerfully ponder and prudently promote. Are you kidding me? You need to walk around with me for a day, bro.

There ain't no time to do all that. I say, you know what? Yeah, that's a problem. That's a problem. If you're too busy in your life to patiently pause, prayerfully ponder and then prudently promote God's truth, you're missing the point of the Christian life.

So you need to slow down, take a breath and do that thing I told you earlier. You need to prayerfully measure what you're all about and think carefully about what direction your life's heading in.

If you tell me you're just too busy to take a spiritual approach to life, we're in trouble. We're in trouble. Life's busy.

[18 : 07] Life's hard. Solomon says, I get that. But if you're too busy to promote the truth of the Lord in your life through a careful, contemplative, wise, objective application of his wisdom in your life, then you're too busy.

You're missing something. Something's amiss somewhere. You need to be walking out of your front door, tanked up spiritually to apply the wisdom of God in the matters of everyday life so that you can honor the Lord.

Not so that you can get ahead. Not even so you can have a great marriage. I want you to have a great marriage, but what does that mean? What is a great marriage? It's a marriage in the sight of the Lord.

So if you're going to live in the matters of life, you've got to have the wisdom of the Lord working in your life. In the context we're dealing with here, it concerns the authority of the king.

Uh-oh. Solomon is speaking here as the most wise and powerful king of his day. And verses 5 and 6 give us the application of discretion of this wise objective judgment concerning earthly authority.

[19 : 21] Look at verses 5 and 6 again. He who keeps a royal command experiences no trouble, no difficulty. For a wise heart knows the proper time and procedure.

For there is a proper time and procedure for every delight, though a man's trouble is heavy upon him. What is he talking about? Well, he's talking about, again, the application of this wisdom from God as it relates to earthly authority.

Here, it's a king. Solomon is a king. He's speaking from a kingly authority himself. But this is how it follows in terms of his advice about the proper time, the proper way to go about dealing with earthly authority.

You look at verse 2 and you'll see it with me. Verses 2 and 3. I'm going to put it up here on the screen so you can see the progression. Keep the command of the king. Do not be in a hurry to leave him.

Do not join in an evil matter. You see that in verses 2 and 3? Keep the command of the king. Do not be in a hurry to leave him.

[20 : 29] Do not join in an evil matter. What is he saying? Wisdom informs your heart and mind. Discretion guides you in two practical realities.

The king says and does what he pleases and he's backed up by his authority. None of you want to end up in jail. I don't want to end up in jail either. But even more importantly, we don't want to dishonor or discredit the name of Christ and how we live before earthly authority.

Now, all of us right now, I bet 10 bucks, are sitting here thinking in terms of a certain series of protocols that we've been living under. And as I look out in my congregation for the sake of the tape, I don't see any faces covered in my congregation at this time.

Is that because we're just all rebels? Not necessarily. Not necessarily. We've all had to principally navigate the protocols as they've come down.

Greg and I, my fellow elder, my fellow pastor, as we have shepherded this church, we have really prayed through and talked many hours over the different ways of dealing with these protocols and what we do and how we do it.

[21 : 43] When we read about our brothers and sisters in Canada being in jail because they are insisting on meeting and it's just a challenge, isn't it? This has been quite a strain and a challenge and even in Christian circles, this has divided churches.

This has divided God's people. And so the wisdom of Solomon comes down to us in principle form and he says this, keep the command of the king, do not be in a hurry to lead him and don't join in an evil matter.

Now that is good counsel. That's the counsel of the Lord. And so in one way, what we can say about all of this is this, look, we may be inconvenienced, we may be made uncomfortable, we may disagree, we may not like, et cetera, et cetera.

Solomon says in all of that, don't be quick to abandon the king. Don't be quick to take off and get out of dodge and remove your support of the king.

So we need to be very, very circumspect, very, very careful as we think about these matters. In other words, we don't need to take a laissez-faire, kind of blow-it-off approach and just say, well, those people up there, they don't know what they're doing and we need to pray for them.

[23 : 04] But we also need to be careful to be supportive and not join in an evil matter. One of the reasons that we're given this counsel is because of the deceitfulness of sin.

The deceitfulness of sin is just that. It's deceitful. It'll sneak up on you and ensnare you. And Solomon says, when it comes to the matters of earthly authority, you need to be very circumspect and very, very careful.

You need to honor this for two reasons. Here they are. Your oath and because it keeps you out of trouble with authority. There's nothing wrong with wanting to stay out of trouble with the law, right?

With authority. The oath most likely in this context concerns the allegiance that Israelites swore to the king with God as witness. You need to know in the history of Israel, Israelites took oaths very seriously in the ancient world.

These were covenant oaths that they would make and a lot of times they would go through certain ceremonies that would depict if I break this oath, let whatever's going on in this ceremony happen to me.

[24 : 16] For example, they would take an animal and they would cut the animal in half and then walk between the two halves. And the picture there was may what happened to this animal happen to me if I break that.

So these people took oaths seriously. Swearing an oath to the king was a serious matter but hear me friends before the Lord. This isn't just some willy nilly thing.

These people took their relationship with earthly authority seriously because they understood heavenly authority. And that's what I'm appealing to you with. Wherever you come out on masks and vaccinations and protocols and all of that because we have it in my congregation.

We have people on different ends of the spectrum, right? And all in between. Wherever you come out on that, this council can help guide us together as a body in this main priority.

Honor the king because you set your heart to honor the Lord who is the high king. so that we would be very careful to do nothing to discredit or dishonor the Lord. We don't want to be those people, do we?

[25 : 26] So say, Jeff, aren't you going to tell us how to prioritize masks and vaccinations? No, I'm not. I'm not going to do it. Moving on. Here is how Dr. Barak summed up.

Dr. Barak is a professor out at Master's Seminary and a commentator that I read extensively. Greg and I actually are both reading his commentary as I preach through Ecclesiastes.

Here's how Dr. Barak summed this up. Here's the quote. No matter how many troubles the royal subject, that would be us, experiences due to the king's decrees, he or she must not rush the matter and commit an error in approaching the king improperly for much needed relief.

Now, I'm going to confess something to you. Last week, I just got on a little bit of a tear and I had me a little fit. It only lasted about two minutes. She's laughing because she was witness to it and I had to repent and I said, I've had it.

That's it. We're going to get some people together and we're going up there and I'm going to find some people to listen to me and I'm going to say, I've had enough. Give us our lives back.

[26 : 32] And I got red and I was around the house and my sweet wife just kept doing what she was doing and later on, it was like, I'm sorry, Suzanne. I just said, no, no, no, no.

Right? And let's pray and let's seek the Lord and let's let this rebel issue calm down in my heart. Now, I see, I'm just like you.

But I'm just like you in this too. I want to honor the Lord. I want to honor the Lord in the privacy of my home, around my wife. I want to honor the Lord with you. I want to honor the Lord in the community.

Part of honoring the Lord is honoring earthly authority. Friends, please, be sober minded and think carefully. Seek the wisdom of the Lord and don't make these decisions arbitrarily.

Obviously, obviously, we need discretion, wise, objective judgment. And we need understanding. in our approach.

[27 : 32] So here's the second aspect of earthly authority that Solomon talks about. The face of understanding. The face of discretion. The face of understanding. If no one knows what will happen, who can tell him when it will happen?

No man has authority to restrain the wind with the winds. Authority over the day of death. There's no discharge in the time of war. Evil will not deliver those who practice it. All this I've 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. Let me give you another cross-reference here from Proverbs 9.10. Proverbs 9.10.

Again, I'm just trying to cement your mind in these biblical principles that we will find throughout the wisdom literature as we deal with this matter.

Proverbs 9.10 says, the fear of the Lord, which is really what we're dealing with here. We'll get to that in a minute. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And notice, the knowledge of the Holy One is what?

[28 : 45] Understanding. Understanding is the New American Standard translation. And knowledge of the Holy One, Almighty God, is understanding.

That's what we're talking about. In this particular verse, in Proverbs 9.10, the word understanding there literally can be rendered understanding, which is why that's it.

There's no big Hebrew nuance here. That's what it's talking about. That's why the NAS puts understanding. But I think it's the ESV uses insight.

That's the idea. Insight. Insight. The knowledge of God gives you insight into the matters of life. Why? Because you start with God.

God is the one who helps us understand our world, ourselves, Him, and how to bring all of that together in the way that we live life to please Him.

[29 : 44] We need that kind of understanding. But I'm saying again, that understanding starts with God. It doesn't start with rationalism. It doesn't start with intellectualism.

It doesn't start with any ism, human ism. It starts with Almighty God. And that's what we're dealing with with understanding. Let me give you one more. Proverbs 2.11.

Proverbs 2.11. Discretion will guard you. Understanding will watch over you.

And in this context, this is all about pursuing wisdom, God's wisdom, for your life and the benefits of that wisdom bearing on your life if you will seek that wisdom and give your heart to that wisdom.

If you notice back up in the context of verse 8 of chapter 2 in Proverbs, guarding the paths of justice, preserving the way of the godly ones.

[30 : 48] Notice in verse 9, discern righteousness and justice and equity in every good course. Then verse 10, for wisdom will enter your heart, knowledge will be pleasant to your soul, and then our discretion will guard you.

Understanding will deliver you from the way of evil. Evil. So, Proverbs 2.11 brings discretion and understanding together in the application of truth to help protect us from the deceptive and seductive forces of evil in our lives.

My friends, there is no other power in heaven or earth better than the wisdom of God for this particular reality, protecting us from the deceptive and seductive forces of evil in our lives.

If you look at it again with verse 7 in Ecclesiastes 8, if no one knows what will happen, who can tell him when it will happen? Now, this is coming right on the heels of him saying there is a proper time and a proper way.

There is a certain decorum, a certain sense of prudence that you need to use when you're dealing with earthly authority. And judging that time is discretion.

[32 : 10] Judging that way is discretion. And that comes from the Lord. The Lord will help you do that. His wisdom will help you do that. Now, in verse 7, if no one knows what will happen, who can tell him what will happen?

What's all this about? No one. No one involved in these matters and in these situations, and we can name so many different ones. I've given you a few that pertain to recent events in our lives.

No one in these matters and situations can know the future. The future. So this makes us all equally helpless to control things.

Especially the future. So many of us want to forecast the future or control the future. Change certain events so the future will be different because I don't like the current reality.

And Solomon is saying, don't do that. Don't let your heart get dragged into that. And he offers proof. He offers proof of this helplessness and this lack of control that all of us need to accept and live under trusting in the Lord in the process.

[33 : 22] This is not like sit on our hands and be, you know, what do you call it? Doormats for people to just walk on us. That's not what he's saying here. He's saying to exercise a careful, measured, prayerful prudence, discretion, and understanding in these matters and realize that there is a certain amount of a lack of control that we all are going to need to live with and trust the Lord in it.

Here's the proof of it. Here's what he says. The proof is in four examples which he lays out for us. No man has authority to restrain the wind with the wind or authority over the day of his death.

There's no discharge in the time of war and evil will not deliver those who practice it. What's he saying? These four examples. You cannot control the wind. The wind blows where it wants to blow and does what it wants to do.

You are not in control of the day of your death. That should sober you. You are not in control of being able to leave the army in the midst of battle or in the time of war.

That's just giving the idea of someone who is subject to an authority. You have to answer to that authority and even in the peril of your own life, battle, you can't just say, well, you know what?

[34 : 38] I don't want to die. So you know what I'm going to do? I'm going to do a little runner. I'm out of here. Right? Now you tell me. We actually have a couple of people in our congregation who've been in combat.

Doesn't your intuition tell you your innate desire to preserve your life tell you that when bombs and bullets are coming your way, you want to go the other way? Well, he's saying right here, you don't have that right in the midst of battle as a soldier to just discharge yourself and check out.

Christian, you are a soldier for Jesus and you don't get to check out. You're in the war until you die and be taken to glory. And the war is right here and it's every day.

And it is not a war against people. That's our mission field. And our battleground.

But those people are not our enemies. They're our mission field. So we need to be careful. People who wear masks and we don't want to wear masks, they're not our enemies.

[35 : 47] People who get vaccinated and we don't want to get vaccinated, they're not our enemies. People who have a different idea of the way the protocols ought to come down and how things ought to be governed are not our enemies.

They may be enemies of Christ, but they're not our enemies. They're our mission field. And what they need to find in us is a discretion, an understanding, and a wisdom that applies the issue of wanting to please Jesus into the matters of everyday life.

They need to see us doing that. Wrestling with it. They need us to get in conversations with them and hear us say things like this. Yeah, I'm not sure. I don't know. Because I've been in some of those conversations and it gets to the point where it's like, well, you're a...

I don't tell people I'm a pastor, by the way. That's why I don't lead with that. You think, oh, it's easy for you to evangelize. You just tell them you're a preacher and you're off to the bases. You know what happens when I do that? They leave. Nobody wants to be around a preacher.

If you're an unbeliever, or they say this, yeah, okay, good. I've been wanting to ask about something. And then they ask some crazy thing about the Bible or something they were told or whatever. And now we're not talking about Jesus.

[36 : 59] So I don't lead with that. But people find out I'm a pastor. They think I ought to have this all figured out. And I don't. So I'm able to say to them, I don't know. I just confess to you.

I struggle with my temper and impatience and being inconvenienced. That's just pride. That's selfishness. You know, are you seeing in all of this, a lot of this is just we need to get over ourselves.

And the only way to do that is in a person. The Lord Jesus Christ. Verse nine. All this I have seen. Now, see, here's a candid confession.

All this I have seen and applied my mind to every deed that has been done under the sun wherein man has exercised authority over another man to his hurt. Solomon applied his great wisdom to deeds where someone uses his or her authority over someone else.

And his analysis is that man uses authority in corrupt and selfish ways to the detriment, to the hurt of others. Solomon says, I'm just stating it. It's a fact.

[38 : 08] It's part of the injustice of life. But you're going to find out that in the context, none of that excuses us from applying discretion and understanding and wisdom in life to these issues to honor the Lord.

Even when the king is saying stuff that makes it hard on us. His point echoes chapter seven, verse twenty nine.

Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices. It ain't God's fault that we're in a mess. It's our own. Given authority, if we don't check it in the face of the Lord, authority will lead us down the wrong path.

That's just our heart. We're bent that way. So listen, can I just tell you something? When politicians and government authorities do crazy stuff and do stuff that I'm trying to choose my words here.

Careful, careful. When they do, I don't care what political party they're from. I'm not espousing a party from up here. I don't preach politics from the pulpit. I'm preaching Jesus and him crucified and I'm saying to all of us, we need to be careful about that.

[39 : 22] When these people come down with these things, whatever party they're from, and they make life difficult for us or we don't agree with the policy that they have or boy, that just took more money out of my, but whatever it is, whatever is happening in all of that, guess what?

Solomon says, don't be shocked. That's what power does in the hearts of people who are not following Christ. It'll do it in you too. Husband, have you ever lorded it over your wife?

Uh-oh. Wife, have you ever lorded it over your husband? That's where we live. We live right here.

Have you ever lorded it over your children? You ever taken advantage of your kids because they were inconveniencing you and so your discipline had more to do with the fact that you were being made uncomfortable rather than honoring the Lord?

God, help us. God, help us. People can't rescue or save themselves.

[40 : 28] Our bent towards evil contaminates every aspect of our being and behavior so we are truly helpless to help ourselves. This is where we end up. Our intellectualism won't rescue us.

Our rationalism, our emotionalism, our wealth, our status in society, our economics, our position in politics, none of that.

We need to consider the ways of God and his heavenly authority in the midst of all of this and so that's realm number two that I'll move through quickly. Realm number two that we're applying the faces of wisdom, godly wisdom applied to heavenly authority.

Now this is where it all starts getting sorted out. Verses 10 through 17. And the first thing that we'll deal with here as Josiah puts it up is the face of knowledge.

So we've done discretion, understanding, and now knowledge. The face of knowledge. And as I've done with the others, I'll give you a couple cross-references to help you gain a better view of the context that we're dealing with and the theme.

[41 : 35] Proverbs 1, 7, and 2, 5. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. Fools despise wisdom and instruction.

So the fear of the Lord, that reverential awe of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. And then Proverbs 2, 5. Then you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God.

Do you understand and see the connection between the fear of the Lord and the knowledge of God? To know the Lord is to learn to fear the Lord. Fearing the Lord is that awe that we have of Him.

That is the basis of godly knowledge for navigating the matters of life. I want to quickly add, it's not an exhaustive knowledge. And it focuses your heart's affections and attentions on knowing God.

Let me throw this quote up here about the fear of the Lord just so you're really clear about what we're talking about. The fear of the Lord is a state of mind in which one's own attitudes, will, feelings, deeds, and goals are exchanged for God's.

[42 : 49] That's no small thing. That can only happen in a relationship with Jesus. Right? It's not something we manufacture. This is a spiritual work that God does in our hearts.

God teaches us to desire what He desires most. to value what He values most. We begin to take on the character of the Lord. That's how you grow in grace.

Taking on the character of the Lord. Glorifying God by displaying that character in the matters of life, daily life. And we honor the Lord that way. Now, unbelievers, unbelievers, don't intuitively know or understand heavenly authority.

In their wicked unbelief, they come and go in the holy place of God to do what they want to do. And the question is, what good did it do them? Look at verse 10. So then I have seen the wicked buried.

All right? So here's the issue. I have seen the wicked die and be buried. In other words, everybody dies. Even the wicked that I watched gain an advantage over people by exploiting them.

[44 : 03] Maybe they got rich. Maybe they cheated. Maybe they got high positions. You know what? They died. There you go. What does He say then?

Those who used to go in and out of the holy place. That's the temple of worship. Soon forgotten in the city where they did all of this. And then notice how He captures all of that.

This too, in verse 10, is futility. They come and they go and they do what they want to do and what good did it do them?

They flaunt their religious pretense. They flaunt their disdain for God and His ways and they still die. And then what?

Well, then they're buried and no one remembers them. And now they have to deal with God and His authority. They flaunted and disdained that authority while they were on earth because they were their own authority.

[45 : 03] But now they're going to answer. And Solomon says, sober up. Sober up. This too is futility. In other words, it's vapor. It's nothing.

Verse 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.

You guys know this. This is a principle dealing with the matter of justice. Again, we're talking about things that come down from authority. The king and the different edicts and rules and all that govern our lives.

And he says, now here's one. Here's one. We've got this stuff that goes on with justice and punishing evil. And what men do because they become corrupt, men drag their feet in executing justice.

Don't they? What is the axiom? The wheels of justice grind slowly or something? Yeah. Okay, so what he's saying is they corrupt it.

[46 : 11] They disregard justice maybe altogether because, and here's the reason, they have no regard for heavenly justice. Their understanding of earthly justice is not governed by an understanding of heavenly justice.

So men make it up. They make it up. And the flaws and the cracks and the inconsistencies begin to show.

And if you've ever been on the injustice side of people, it can be brutal. It can stay with you. It can leave some deep scars.

It's real. You see people all the time get all wound up about this and conspiracy stuff and their whole life is lived researching and chasing and trying to identify all that.

And Solomon says, you know what? You need to accept you live in a fallen, broken place. And this stuff happens. Don't spend your life trying to control it and making your life all about being the squeaky wheel and the troublemaker because all that's going to do is make the king mad.

[47 : 24] And you're going to be miserable. There's a better way to do this. That's why he's saying discretion, understanding, knowledge, judgment.

Be careful. People don't live in light of judgment because it's the nature of fallen man to consider and administer justice wrongly.

Swift justice is a deterrent to evil and sobers people about judgment. That's it. I didn't go back and research and be able to tell you all this stuff about how they handled justice in Israel.

But I sure do know what stoning is. And I sure do know what the Old Testament says about people who do wrong. And there are certain things that carried the death penalty and it was swift.

That's a matter for the Lord. Here in our context, he's asking us to be sobered by this reality, not embittered. Don't go on a crusade.

[48 : 32] Then verse 12, although a sinner does evil, and I see here comes back to reality, although a sinner does evil a hundred times and may lengthen his life, still there's something that I know and I want you to know it.

It will be well for those who fear God and who fear him openly. In other words, who live their lives according to the fear of the Lord. What's he saying? This is the counter to verse 11.

Even with God, even with God, it seems like the wicked can sin with impunity. That's the idea of a hundred times. Right? And still they live on just doing their thing like nothing happened.

Ugh! Right? Solomon knew this. But here's his conviction. See, now we're moving from observations and consternations to, but here's something that I'm convicted about.

Here is my faith response to this. Right? And here it is. What does he tell us? His response of faith in God leads him to confess the truth of what his heart knows.

[49 : 42] Those who live in true reverence of God are secure in God's care forever. It doesn't mean they're not going to have problems. It doesn't mean that they're not going to suffer injustices.

It means they can trust God to do the best and highest thing for them and take them into glory. So we have a heavenly, heavenly, eternal perspective on these matters.

And that changes the way that we move through them. The circumstance might not change, but your heart can. And that's what he's concerned about. Not so with the wicked and the reason is given to us.

The reason is given to us. Look at it. Verse 13. It will not be well for the evil man. He will not lengthen his days like a shadow. Why? Because he doesn't fear God.

That's the reason. He doesn't fear God. This is so important to Solomon.

[50 : 49] You see, he has to know that what he sees is temporary and what he doesn't see is eternally true. So he's living by faith, not by sight at this point.

And that's helping him. So he speaks of what his heart is convicted and convinced about in verse 13. Because unbelievers don't worship God, they'll not live in the length of life God provides for believers in eternity.

I think this is the idea that's related to verse 12, where the unbelieving person lengthens his earthly life. Look at that with me. Although a sinner does evil a hundred times and may lengthen his life.

Right? But now look at verse 13. But it will not be well for the evil man and he will not lengthen his life or his days. Is this a contradiction in scripture?

This is the kind of stuff unbelievers love to latch onto and then talk about the inconsistencies of the Bible. But I think that this is what's happening. Where the unbelieving person lengthens his earthly life is by selfish living, which puts himself before others.

[51 : 59] That's verse 12. He does that through this selfishness. But in 13, we're talking about something entirely different. It's his eternal life. That is what will not be like a shadow.

And if you think about a shadow during the day, think about a tree in your house or your house itself. As the sun moves across its place in the sky, the day grows longer, the shadows grow longer.

So the idea is his life won't be like that. His life's going to come to an end on the earth, but it's not going to be like that shadow that just keeps on lengthening as the sun goes down and down and down.

We can look forward to our life being extended. Death here for Christians means life in eternity. Not so with the wicked.

Not so with the wicked. He will experience a death-like existence of eternal separation from God in hell.

[53 : 04] So this is all temporal for the wicked. They are focused on what's here. The reality of verse 14 is what is so discouraging and confusing, I think, for Solomon.

Because twice in verse 14, he uses futility and underscores the reality of what he's seen and what he's been saying since chapter 1. The ways of God and the matters of life are beyond our searching out.

There is futility which is done on the earth. Righteous men get what wicked deserve. Wicked get what the righteous deserve. It's just, it's all futility.

Yeah. This is the broken world we live in. And then verse 15. The key phrase in verse 15. So I commended pleasure for there is nothing good for a man under the sun except to eat and drink and be merry and this will stand by him in his toils throughout the days of his life which God has given him.

Which God has given him under the sun. In other words, all that we can enjoy in this life is a gift from God. Church, for you who've been here for this series, that's a constant refrain.

[54 : 17] Right? The gift of God. The gift of God. See your life and even the enjoyment of your life. All the provision in your life as a great gift from God and make the best of it.

Make the best. Don't squander that gift. It is a gift. Enjoy it. Grab it. Drink it in. And give God the glory.

Or else you missed it. You missed it. Don't make it about you. God given enjoyment is the Lord's counter to the toils, perplexities, and adversities, and injustices of life.

So it helps counterbalance the harsher realities of a sin broken world. He gives us good gifts to enjoy. And then verses 16 and 17.

I'm moving quickly through some of this and skipping a few things. You wouldn't even know that if I didn't tell you. But anyway, 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, I saw every work of God.

[55 : 25] I concluded man can't discover the work which has been done. That is God's work. Even though man should seek it, he will not discover it. Though the wise man should say I know really in truth, he doesn't know either.

He can't discover it. So this caps off the chapter. It also provides the backdrop for the rest of the book. Solomon says, I gave my whole heart to searching, examining, investigating, intensely laboring, even to the point of losing valuable sleep.

That's what that means. To try and comprehend God's work in the lives of people. And here's his conclusion. I'm going to throw it up here on the screen. The conclusion of Solomon. Man cannot discover the work which God has done in the past or the work he'll do in the future as it concerns the issues of life.

No one can know all of that except God. Some of you may have astutely realized I didn't deal with verse one. So now I'm going to deal with verse one.

We come back now to verse one. What does it say? 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.

[56 : 36] The person who truly relies on God and his wisdom for life is rare. Who is like a man of wisdom or a woman of wisdom? He or she knows the blessings of being guided in life by the grace and truth which God supplies.

So God's wisdom wears many faces. And as a growing believer, you learn, you learn to apply those faces to life's circumstances and it brings you a sense of calm.

It brings you a sense of peace and confidence and courage and that makes you smile. That puts a smile of contentment on your face. Right?

Look at this quote. Wisdom softens one's face as a reflection of the softened heart. That individual becomes more gracious, merciful, and forgiving.

Does trusting God calm you? Does it balm your soul? What does Peter say when you're anxious? When you're full of all kinds of anxiety? Remember, God cares for you.

[57 : 42] Cast all that on him. That's 1 Peter 5. Cast all that on him. He cares for you. Trusting God calms your soul. Calming your soul brings calm to your face so that you radiate what's in your soul.

If you're all torn up inside and anxious about everything and if you've made your life all about going out and finding conspiracies and making everybody pay for making you uncomfortable, then your face will look like that.

I love Jesus. And then this. Living, living in the wisdom of God bears out the favor of God, brings the blessings of God, and brightens the face of a believer.

You can look at Proverbs 8.35 to see that. So you have a choice. You have a choice in your life as it relates to your worldview. Here it is.

You can look to the works of man to help define and enjoy life or you can look to the works of God to help define and enjoy life. In Ecclesiastes 8, I think what Solomon speaks to is this wise earthly king that he is as a wise God fearer, he brings the perspectives and offers us that sage counsel telling us we shouldn't waste the joys and blessings of the gifts of God in this life.

[59 : 11] Eat, drink, and be merry and realize that all of that is a gift of God and steward it well. Steward it well. He's telling us enjoy it.

Don't waste it. Look at this and I'll be done. By chafing against God's authority to act as he chooses or by chasing explanations for God's inscrutable actions in the everyday affairs of mankind.

And we do that. We chafe against his authority. We complain and we grumble and we gripe. It's just ah, damn it. Don't do that. Or chase explanations.

I gotta know why God did this. I gotta know why this is happening to me right now. This doesn't seem fair. This doesn't feel right. No, no, no, no, no. And so we'll quote the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 as we finish up.

1 Corinthians chapter 1 20 through 25. I'm reading again from the New American Standard.

[60 : 20] Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? It should be up here on your screen. Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God. God then was pleased through the foolishness of the message preached the cross to save those who believe.

For indeed Jews ask for signs Greeks search for wisdom. That's right. But we preach Christ crucified beloved to Jews a stumbling block to Gentiles foolishness but to those who are the call both Jews and Greeks Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God because the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men and that is all in Christ.

Amen. Let's pray together. Well Father God as we've taken the time this morning to look into Ecclesiastes 8 we've hurried through our dear Lord and we ask that you would help us to contemplate and retain as we have been convicted by your Holy Spirit.

We would take prayerful measure of our lives and own the reality that Jesus saves Jesus saves. That we would look to Jesus and trust Jesus.

[61 : 45] if there's anyone in our services today Father who does not have that relationship with Jesus whereby they are trusting Jesus to forgive them for their sins.

Trusting Jesus to bring them into heaven. Trusting Jesus to teach them the way of wise living on this earth. Trusting Jesus to help them know the joy of who he is as a savior.

Then we pray for those people now Father that you would give them the gift of eternal life in his name. Help us dear God to understand.

Help us to have knowledge. Help us to be prudent. Help us to seek out the will of the Lord in discretion and to apply those things in our lives so that Jesus will be much honored and glorified and made much of as we go through the daily issues of our life.

Lord it's true and we just have to confess it. I confess it of myself and on behalf of the people I shepherd. We need help and we need your help most of all.

[62 : 55] So help us God even as you promised to help us. Help us to live in the strength of Jesus that you've provided for us and live by his righteousness for his glory in his name we pray.
Amen. Amen.