

**Ecclesiastes 8:1-17**  
**January 26, 2022**

**II. Human Effort (1:2-6:9)**

**III. Human Limits (6:10-12:8)**

**A. No One Knows What Is Good (6:10-7:14)**

**B. Wisdom and Righteousness (7:15-29)**

**C. Even the Wise Do Not Know (8:1-17)**

*Who knows what is good for man in life? Who can tell a man what will happen after him under the sun? (6:12)*

Solomon continues to answer – or attempt to answer – this question as we arrive in chapter eight. *What is good for man in life?* Turns out, it's impossible to know. The questions that begin in v. 1 are ultimately answered in vv. 7-8, 17. *Who is like a wise man? And who knows the interpretation of a thing?*

In the process of determining the answer, Solomon first examines an example of trying to figure out why civil rulers act the way they do. Now there's an exercise in futility! He begins in v. 2 by issuing some blanket wisdom – it's usually best just to do what the law requires of you. Even if it's not under their God-given jurisdiction, *a wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment (v. 6).*

It would be incredibly easy to start declaring ourselves exempt from an over-reaching civil authority, since most of what they do is over-reach. However, we need to weigh the risks and the costs, and the wisest thing to do is hold our nose and comply. After all, *where the word of a king is, there is power (v. 4),* and they will use their sword for whatever suits their fancy. Not to go too far down the rabbit trail, but if it goes against the Word of God or our conscience, then we are compelled to follow the example of Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Daniel!

As we consider the lawlessness of those who ought to hold it dear, we are left in a fair amount of despair. In vv. 6-7, we are told repeatedly that we can't know their rhyme or reason, nor do we have power to figure it out. Indeed, *there is a time in which one man rules over another to his own hurt (v. 9).*

The seemingly arbitrary and unknowable aspect of life continues in vv. 10-14, where Solomon considers the lack of justice. The wicked never seem to be punished and, if they do, *the sentence... is not executed speedily (v. 11).* As a result, *the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.* See? Some things never change!

Yet, at the end of it all, we *surely know that it will be well with those who fear God (v. 12; cf. Prov 23:17; 24:1).* From our perspective, it might seem like it takes too long for righteousness and justice to come, but we should rest assured knowing that it will one day come. Righteous living will be worth it.

Since life seems to be so random and haphazard, Solomon returns to one of his central themes: *I commended enjoyment, because a man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry; for this will remain with him in his labor all the days of his life which God gives him under the sun (v. 15).*

Why bother trying to figure out what is unfigureoutable? We're only going to end up with a migraine, or worse, spiritual disillusionment. Instead, take stock of what the Lord has given to us, and simply enjoy it, giving Him the honor and glory that is due in Him in the process.

After all, *man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun (vv. 16-17 [3x]).* No matter how hard he *labors do discover it,* and *though a wise man attempts to know it,* it's not going to happen. Focus on your corner of the world that God has given to you, and be glad in it.