

How to Live a Fulfilled Life: Fear God and Obey the Laws of the Land

Ecclesiastes 8

Outline

- 1 | Wisdom illuminates a man's countenance
- 2-4 | Keep the commands of authorities
- 5-9 | Living lawfully offers comfort in the uncertainties of life
- 10-13 | Fear of God is the only sure way of living well
- 14-15 | Sometimes the righteous experience suffering and evil men experience blessing; Remain faithful to God in all things
- 16-17 | There is no end to discovering the mighty works of God in the universe

Reflections

In this chapter, the Preacher is continuing his ruminations on the meaning of life and how to find fulfillment in it. This chapter begins with a simple concept.

Ecclesiastes 8:1 NASB 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.

Wisdom illumines a man. To put it another way, the more we understand things, the better we see. This in turn causes our countenance to change. A person's countenance is most visibly seen in their face, thus wisdom causes a person's "face to beam."

One of the things everyone has to learn is how to read emotions, not only in ourselves but in others as well. I'm sure many of you have seen those charts that have a bunch of faces on them that depict various emotions. If not here is an example from clipartsheep.com.



Sad Mad Glad Hurt Ashamed Afraid
Credit: clipartsheep.com

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Our understanding, or wisdom, regarding a matter enables us to better control our emotions rather than our emotions control us. This life will have many things that can cause us to question things. The Preacher points to one of the most perplexing examples of this: evil/wicked people seem to go unpunished in life and good/righteous people seem to suffer.

The New Living Translation translates it like this.

Ecclesiastes 8:14 NLT And this is not all that is meaningless in our world. In this life, good people are often treated as though they were wicked, and wicked people are often treated as though they were good. This is so meaningless!

As much as we try in this world, there is a certainty that we can't control: we are all going to die. Trying to control it is like trying to control the wind!

Ecclesiastes 8:7-8 NASB If no one knows what will happen, who can tell him when it will happen? **8** No man has authority to restrain the wind with the wind, or authority over the day of death; and there is no discharge in the time of war, and evil will not deliver those who practice it.

So what does the Preacher conclude.

Ecclesiastes 8:15 NLT So I recommend having fun, because there is nothing better for people in this world than to eat, drink, and enjoy life. That way they will experience some happiness along with all the hard work God gives them under the sun.

Note the combination of enjoying life and doing the work God gives them to do. Honoring God in our work and life enables us to enjoy it. Especially when all that seems wrong in this world seems to go unpunished.

Lord God, may we never take for granted the work You give us to do. Grant to us the wisdom necessary to enjoy our lives and the people in it, so that we will not be over burdened when the difficult times come. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, in Jesus' name. Amen.

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