

Ecclesiastes: The Work of God

Ecclesiastes 7 & 8

Sources of Wisdom (7:1-14)

- Wisdom is gained:
 - By confronting our mortality (v. 1-4)
 - More insight is gained through suffering than pleasure
 - From good correction (v. 5-7)
 - Rather than from empty platitudes
 - Through patience
 - Not taking short-cuts, like oppression & bribery (. 7)
 - Having a long-term view of things (v. 8)
- Thinking through the outcome from the onset
 - Being slow to anger (v. 9)
 - Not being *stuck* in the past (. 10)
- Because it does not help us see God's work in the present
- Wisdom is of great benefit (v. 12-14)
 - Because it shelters us in times of trouble
 - It increases during hardships
 - It reminds us that God is in control
 - God uses both prosperity & hardships to teach us lessons

The Search for Virtue (7:14-29)

- The term 'righteous' here refers to a self-righteousness based on *our* actions
 - Rather than in a right-standing granted by God's grace
 - Instead, one should learn to fear God, which leads to true righteousness
- Some wickedness is inevitable in life, but it should never be pursued
 - This is because we are sinful by nature & choice
 - We are scheming and deceptive
 - Which affects our relationships
 - When we admit this, it also allows us to be honest about our own failings & fragile egos, so God can deal with sin in us (v. 21-22)

God's Unseen Work (8:1-17)

- We are called to obey those in positions of authority because they have been placed there by God (see Rom. 13:1-5; 1 Pet. 2:13-15)
 - Though not when they are in opposition to God's explicit commands (See Ex. 1:17-21; Josh. 2:1-7; 1 Sam. 14:45; 1 Kings 18; Dan. 3; 6; Acts 4:19-21; 5:29; Rev. 13:15)
 - When they are in the wrong, we must be tactful and diplomatic (v. 3-4)
 - And remember that human power is limited and fleeting (v. 6-9)
 - And ultimately God will end the reign of tyrannical and self-righteous rulers (v. 10a)
- Ultimately, justice will be executed by God (v. 10a-15)
 - Though it is sometimes delayed
 - And sometimes the righteous suffer & the wicked prosper
- This view can lead to an enjoyment of one's life now, even amid injustice (v. 15)

So What?

- Does our righteousness come from our work or God's?
- Do we trust Him to work in the world around us, even when we don't understand?

Meditation Verse: Ecclesiastes 8:17

Scripture Reading Challenge: Ecclesiastes 9 & 10