

# KEEPING THE KING'S COMMAND

## MARCH 19, 2006 – ECCLESIASTES 8:1-17 – Lesson 9

### MEMORY VERSE:

**Ecclesiastes 8:5**, *“Whoever keeps a command will know no evil thing and the wise heart will know the proper time and just way.”*

### INTRODUCTION

Here in chapter eight, Solomon appears to contradict his earlier observations (in chapter two) regarding the futility of pursuing wisdom. In chapter two, Solomon states that pursuing the wisdom of this world to gain lasting happiness and satisfaction will result in very little advantage and lead to ultimate futility. The wisdom Solomon writes about in chapter eight is the kind that comes only from the Lord. This wisdom is the ability to see life from God's perspective and then to know the best course of action to take. Wisdom from the Lord is knowing and trusting God and not merely a way to find God. The man who knows God in this way possesses a heavenly wisdom that transforms him both in body and soul. Part of this wisdom is submitting to the authority of our earthly rulers and relying on God, instead of ourselves, to deal with what we cannot control or change.

### UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

1. In chapter two, Solomon writes that worldly wisdom is “vanity” and “striving after the wind.” In chapter eight, he writes that Godly wisdom is one so sure and comforting that it softens a hard countenance. Why did it take Solomon a lifetime to understand this difference?
2. Why is it important we “keep the king's command?” (verse 2). Can you imagine a circumstance in which you would not obey the king (President Bush or other leader)? What would this circumstance be?
3. What does Solomon mean by his statements in verses 6-8? Why does God conceal from us most of the mysteries of life?

4. In verses 11-13, what injustices does Solomon describe? In what ways will it “go better for the God fearer?” Why?
  
5. In the face of life’s injustices and uncertainties, why does Solomon encourage the enjoyment of life? (verse 15)
  
6. In verses 16-17, what is Solomon trying to convey concerning human wisdom? What advice is implied from these verses regarding Solomon’s realization?

### **OUR WALK WITH GOD**

1. How does your search for answers to life’s problems and difficulties affect your relationship with the Lord? Why is it so difficult to trust the Lord when these answers seem unattainable or impossible? What unsettled situation in your life do you need to turn over to God in complete trust?
  
2. When is it hardest to “do right?” How do we pursue righteous living without falling into the trap of legalism?
  
3. Can you remember a time when someone you knew to be corrupt seemed to prosper at every turn, with no apparent consequences for his/her sin? How did you feel about this? After studying chapter eight, how do you feel about the situation now?

## GOING DEEPER

1. Read Psalm 37:1-10; Isaiah 14:24; Romans 8:28; 1 Corinthians 2:9. According to these verses, what is the attitude we should have toward “evildoers” in regards to God’s plan for our lives?

## ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS FOR THE WEEK

“How do I live in God’s presence? How do I detect his unseen hand on my shoulder and His inaudible voice in my ear? ... How can you and I grow familiar with the voice of God?” Here are a few ideas:

1. *Give God your waking thoughts.* Before you face the day, face the Father. Before you step out of bed, step into His presence.
2. *Give God your waiting thoughts.* Spend time with Him in silence.
3. *Give God your whispering thoughts.* Imagine considering every moment as a potential time of communion with God.
4. *Give God your waning thoughts.* At the end of the day, let your mind settle on Him. Conclude the day as you began it: talking to God.

Max Lucado, “Just Like Jesus”

“To consider persons and events and situations only in the light of their effect upon myself is to live on the doorstep of hell.”

Thomas Merton

“If there were no obscurity, man would not feel his corruption; if there were no light, man could not hope for a cure. Thus it is not only right and useful for us that God should be partly concealed and partly revealed, since it is equally dangerous for man to know God without knowing his own wretchedness as to know his wretchedness without knowing God.”

Blaise Pascal

“God didn’t forget to tell us anything important. There are things too great for our comprehension and others too dangerous for our grasp. We will only ever know what God permits us to know. As the guardian of all knowledge, He holds every secret. Our response is to bow in humility then to look up toward the peak of the mountain and get on with the journey.”

David Jeremiah, “Searching For Heaven On Earth”