

RESPECT FOR RULERS

ECCLESIASTES 8: 1 – 8 BRO. SUNDAY EYANRIN (EVANG.)

Verse one says, *“Who is like the wise? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man’s wisdom makes his face shine, and the hardness of his face is changed.”*

As we’ve seen, the author at times speaks very highly of wisdom while at others, he is careful to note its limitations. Here he is inspired by wisdom. If you are wise, your face shines. Wisdom makes a hardened countenance, soft. That is – **if you consistently make wise decisions, your life will be much happier and fuller than if you make foolish decisions.**

We all know of people who are not very happy because of unwise decisions they have made. It makes them sad for making such decisions.

In verse two the author takes up his main topic and he declared, *“I say: Keep the king’s command, because of God’s oath to him. Be not hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand in an evil cause, for he does whatever he pleases. For the word of the king is supreme, and who may say to him, “What are you doing?” Whoever keeps a command will know no evil thing...”*

The first main truth about relating to kings or all in authority is : **Respect all those in authority over you.** This is the consistent message of the Bible. In **Romans 13**, Paul teaches us how followers of Christ must relate to those in authority . In **Rom. 13:7** he says, *“Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.”*

We are called to respect those over us. In verses two and three, the author tells us **HOW we are to respect those in authority over us** and in verse four he tells us **WHY**. The first way we are to respect those over us—(in this case the king) is in verse two. *“I say: Keep the king’s command, because of God’s oath to him.”* That is— **we must obey those in authority over us because God installed them.**

This is a curious verse because it tells us that **God makes oaths to kings**. We know that God made oaths to David when he established a covenant with him, but probably what is meant here is more general and is affirmed in Scripture multiple

times. That is—**God makes a commitment to uphold the authority of his rulers because he puts them in place.**

In First Samuel 2:10 Hannah praises God saying, “... *The LORD will judge the ends of the earth; He will give strength to his king and exalt the power of his anointed.*” **The king belongs to God**—he is His and He will exalt— lift up, support the power of His anointed.

Apostle Paul echoes this in **Romans 13:1-2**, “¹ *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.* ² *Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.*”

Daniel 4:32 says, “...The Most High rules the kingdom of men and gives it to whom he will.” In **John 19:10-11**, in a famous exchange between Jesus and Pontius Pilate before his crucifixion says, “¹⁰ *So Pilate said to him, “You will not speak to me? Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?”* ¹¹ *Jesus answered him, “You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above. Therefore, he who delivered me over to you has the greater sin.”*”

When Pilate ordered Jesus’ crucifixion, he was doing so with the authority God had given him. This truth doesn’t condone evil acts and abuses of power by those in rather authority, but it does tell us that **God sets up these authorities and, unless it brings us into disobedience to God—we must obey what those in authority tell us.**

The second way we are to respect authority is in verse three “*Be not hasty to go from his presence...*” In the Ancient Near East, having an audience or appearing before the king was a great honor. In the book of Esther, Queen Esther was fearful that she might be executed if she approached the king without his personal summons and she was his wife! It’s out of that context that Qohelet writes.

If you have an audience with the king, you do not leave his presence hastily. **That would communicate contempt or even disrespect.** A second way we respect authority is: **We must not show contempt for those in authority over us.**

In **First Peter 2:17**, Peter says, “*Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.*” The emperor of the Roman empire at the time Peter was writing was Nero—who murdered his own mother and no small number of Roman Christians whom he set ablaze as human torches.

On a human level, he was certainly worthy of contempt, but Peter calls the church **to honor him.** Again, **this is because in honoring the king, we are**

honoring God and in dishonoring the king, we are dishonoring God who providentially installed the king.

A third way we respect those in authority is in the second half of verse three. “...Do not take your stand in an evil cause...” The call is—**do not formerly raise opposition to the king when he is doing something you don’t agree with.** In many cases when a king with absolute power is doing something you don’t agree with—you will only openly oppose him if you want to die. Again, **there are times when we must oppose authorities if they are calling us to disobey God.** In Acts chapter five: 29, Peter told the Jewish religious leaders who ordered them to stop preaching Christ, “*We must obey God rather than men.*”

Verse four tells us, “*For the word of the king is supreme, and who may say to him, ‘What are you doing?’*” This kind of open challenge to the king’s judgment will not change anything other than the length of your life or your career. Why? Because your action becomes a personal, direct confrontation or challenge to someone with absolute authority.

verse five :The first part of verse five tells us WHY we must respect the king’s authority. “*Whoever keeps a command will know no evil thing.,*” Obedience to the king will keep you out of trouble. Again, in Romans 13, Paul speaks to this and says of the governing authority, “*for he is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God’s wrath on the wrongdoer.*” *God puts authorities in place to punish those who do wrong. This doesn’t mean that all the king’s or state’s laws and regulations are just, but it does mean that **God uses civil authorities as his servants to bring his wrath on wrongdoers.***

The point of the first four and a half verses is—respect the king’s (or governing authorities) authority whether that be in the form of paying the taxes you owe, observing traffic signs, corporate laws or any other law or regulation given by the governor or your boss—provided that does not cause you to disobey or break God's command.

verse Six. says “*...the wise heart will know the proper time and the just way. For there is a time and a way for everything, although man’s trouble lies heavy on him.*” Open opposition is often not very effective as we have seen—especially in the case of a king with absolute authority. It’s better to use wisdom to influence the decision-makers over you.

Let’s take a look at some wisdom from the book of Proverbs as well as example of Old Testament figures of this kind of wisdom. *Proverbs 15:1* says, “*A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*” A very good expression of wisdom is seen in **Second Samuel 12:1-8**. David had committed adultery and a host of other sins. Pls, read **2 Sam. 12:1-8**

Verse seven, Says *"For he does not know what is to be", this is just people in general, "does not know what is to be, for who can tell him how it will be?"* Part of the difficulty in all of these decisions, of course, is we don't know how the course of things will turn out, what the consequences for our decisions will be.

Verse eight. Says, *"No man has power to retain the spirit, or power over the day of death. There is no discharge from war, nor will wickedness deliver those who are given to it."* The word translated here as "spirit" is also often translated "wind" It is better to use wind—**no one has the power to stop the wind or delay the day of their death.**

If you are in a battle, you can't even run from those who are fighting against you without being killed by your superior officers. We are so limited—when we're forced to make a tough decision like disobeying those in authority over us,

The main point . The author says, "... nor will wickedness deliver those who are given to it. He is saying that **wickedness in a ruler or one in authority will ultimately bring down consequences on him/her.** That's what it means when it says, "wickedness will not deliver those who are given to it."

The negative consequences of sinful decisions will ultimately come to those who abuse power. Finally, The Church is the spiritual Government of God on earth. Christ is the head of the Church, the Elders are under the Authority of Christ, while the Elders are given the Authority to oversee the Church.

Heb. 13:17 Declares, *"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you"*.