

THE MANY 'FACES' OF WISDOM

Ecclesiastes 8:1-17

“The main point is that finding purpose in life apart from God is futile (Ecc. 12:13-14). The things of this world—pleasure, work, achievement, possessions, friends, etc.—are all meaningless when pursued as ends unto themselves. True purpose and joy in life is found in God.” *(Deepak Reju)*

*“**Fear God** and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.” (Ecc. 12:12-13)*

The fear of God is the soul of godliness.

Are you a God-fearer?

*“But the lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on **those who fear Him...**” (Ps. 103:17)*

*“So, the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on **in the fear of the Lord.**” (Acts 9:31)*

*“Therefore, having these precious promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness **in the fear of the Lord.**” (2 Cor. 7:1)*

*“Honor all people, love the brotherhood, **fear God,** honor the king.” (1 Pet. 2:17)*

*Isaiah said of Jesus, “The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and **the fear of the Lord.**” (Is. 11:2-3)*

“The fear of God implies our constant consciousness of relation to God... our primary relationship is to God and all other relationships are determined by, and to be interpreted in terms of, our relation to Him.

“God was proving [testing] Abraham and proving him in respect of his fear of God. Abraham’s obedience demonstrated his fear of God. It was *because Abraham feared the Lord* that he obeyed God’s voice.” *(John Murray)*

Identify your own personal earthly vanities, your earthly empties (idols you are living for), and take prayerful measure of them in light of the fear of the Lord and your own mortality. God is the only true path to true purpose and genuine fulfillment in life.

Solomon helps us apply some of the **many faces** of godly wisdom in **two primary realms** in which we all live and move and have our being.

I. Godly Wisdom Applied to Earthly Authority (Eccles. 8:2-9)

The face of discretion, or wise judgment (v. 2-6)

Godly wisdom helps us wisely judge the proper time and the proper way of dealing with earthly authority. So it follows like this:

- v. 2: *“Keep the command of the king...”*
- v. 3: *“Do not be in a hurry to leave him;” “Do not join in an evil matter...”*

“No matter how many troubles the royal subject experiences due to the king’s decrees, he or she must not rush the matter and commit an error in approaching the king improperly for much needed relief.” (*Dr. William Barrick*)

I. Godly Wisdom Applied to Earthly Authority (Eccles. 8:2-9)

The face of understanding (v. 7-9)

I. Godly Wisdom Applied to Earthly Authority (Eccles. 8:2-9)

II. Godly Wisdom Applied to Heavenly Authority (Eccles. 8:10-17)

The face of knowledge (Prov. 1:7; 2:5)

“The fear of the Lord is a state of mind in which one’s own attitudes, will, feelings, deeds, and goals are exchanged for God’s.” *(John MacArthur)*

II. Godly Wisdom Applied to Heavenly Authority (Eccles. 8:10-17)

The face of knowledge (Prov. 1:7; 2:5)

There is no heaven in their hearts.

II. Godly Wisdom Applied to Heavenly Authority (Eccles. 8:10-17)

The face of knowledge (Prov. 1:7; 2:5)

This is the idea related to Ecclesiastes 8:12, where the unbelieving person thinks he can lengthen his earthly life by selfish living. He puts himself above others to further himself in a life of selfish ambition.

II. Godly Wisdom Applied to Heavenly Authority (Eccles. 8:10-17)

The face of knowledge (Prov. 1:7; 2:5)

The ways of God in the matters of life are beyond our searching out. How does he tell us to live given this reality?

The key phrase is, “...*which God has given him under the sun.*” In other words, all that we can enjoy in this life is a gift from God, so we should make it a point to enjoy it in Him.

Enjoying God helps counterbalance the harsher realities of this sin-broken world beyond our control.

II. Godly Wisdom Applied to Heavenly Authority (Eccles. 8:10-17)

The face of knowledge (Prov. 1:7; 2:5)

His conclusion: Man cannot discover the work which God has done in the past or the work He will do in the future as it concerns the matters of life. No one can know this but God himself.

Leave the past in the past and leave the future to God.

Two primary operations of your heart work against you thinking and acting in the fear of the Lord, from living in a way that is most defined by your deep reverence for Jesus.

Expectations

Desires

Motives

Motives drive
what you do and
why you do it.

“Since motives are such an important part of life, we would expect God’s Word to speak about them, and it certainly does. In fact, **the entire Bible** is a book about motivation.” *(Ed Welch)*

“Wisdom softens one’s face as a reflection of the softened heart... that individual becomes more gracious, merciful, and forgiving.” *(Dr. William Barrick)*

That’s the work of God worth contemplating and being grateful for.

In **Ecclesiastes 8**, Solomon speaks to us as a **wise earthly king** and as a **wise God-fearer**. From those two perspectives he offers us his sage and godly counsel, telling us that we **should not waste** the joys and blessings of the gifts of God in this life:

1. By **chafing** against God's authority to act as He chooses, or
2. By **chasing** explanations for God's inscrutable actions in the everyday affairs of mankind.

GRACE CHURCH
WILLIAMSBURG