

Ecclesiastes 8:1-8 – Desirable Things – Part 5

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: There is an independent streak in everyone man, woman, boy, or girl. You want to do something your way because you think your way is always best. You don't want others to tell you what to do. A child doesn't like his parents to tell him to get up or do his homework. A wife doesn't want her husband to tell her what house work she must do. A husband complains about the honey-do list from his wife. Members of the church don't like when elders tell them to change their way of life and conform to God's ways. One of the reasons Ron Paul is attracting much support in the US Republican primaries is because he thinks governments are too involved in the life of the people. He belongs to a group called Libertarians. He thinks the government has no business telling you what you should do with your body or what you can do in your home. He is a naturally attractive candidate for many. This is an old struggle. Today, God will tell you to guard against that independent streak and submit to 2 things against which you are naturally rebellions: civil authorities, and Divine providence. God also shows you that submission to these things is of utmost importance for your growth in Christ.

Our headings are: **Subject Yourself to Civil Leaders**, and **Prepare Yourself to Accept Calamities**.

Our goals are: **That you will show you belong to Jesus Christ by submitting to those people and things he has placed over you. In doing this, you will be a witness for Jesus Christ.**

Subject yourself to Civil Leaders

1 Who is like a wise man? And who knows the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom makes his face shine, And the sternness of his face is changed.

1. The man who knows and believes in God is truly wise. He is truly wise because truth has made him wise. This why Solomon said that wise man is better than the rich, famous, and powerful. As a result, he is useful to his neighbors by what he says and how he lives. (His face shines.) This was the picture of Job in Job 29. Men "drooled" to hear him speak and take from his wisdom. That is the point of Verse 1.

Job 29: 2 Oh, that I were as in months past, As in the days when God watched over me; 3 When His lamp shone upon my head, And when by His light I walked through darkness; 7 "When I went out to the gate by the city, When I took my seat in the open square, 8 The young men saw me and hid, And the aged arose and stood; 9 The princes refrained from talking, And put their hand on their mouth; 10 The voice of nobles was hushed, And their tongue stuck to the roof of their mouth. 11 When the ear heard, then it blessed me, And when the eye saw, then it approved me;

But what specific things did Solomon have in mind... How does a Reformed Christian man or woman use God's wisdom to shine for Christ... reflect Christ – knowing that Christ is Wisdom? Look at Verse 2.

2 I say, "Keep the king's commandment for the sake of your oath to God.

2. Speaking here as the Preacher, not as the prince, Solomon said: "You are to subject yourself to the governing civil authorities." This is a repeated theme in the Bible.

1 Peter 2: 17 Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

Romans 13:1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

There are few things to keep in mind, however, in your submission to the civil authorities.

a. The ground of your obedience to the civil authorities is not what you could get out of them.

Don't obey the government because it will give you welfare...or it will give you protection. No, you keep civil laws because you made an oath as God's child. You keep the civil laws because God demands that all his children keep the laws of the land. God is a witness to every oath... You may not do as the RC's... where you can swear with your mouth and say that your heart didn't mean it. This is why they annul marriage and other oaths they take. This is sin.

b. You may not reject civil laws because they are harsh. Even if the laws cause hardships, you are to follow them. You are not to rebel even if you are over taxed and under-represented.

c. God does not say that you are to subject yourself to the civil authorities when they do something you like, but always subject yourself to them.

3. You may only refuse to obey the civil authorities when they force you to break God's law, or

prevent you from keeping God's law. If they do, then you must have the courage like Esther to her king. You must not be a silent bystander. You must take the bodily risk and confront a tyrant. Have the courage of Elijah to stand up to Jezebel, Ahab, and the prophets of Baal. Have the courage as Micaiah – and tell the king that because of his rebellion, God was going to kill him. You must have the courage of John Baptist when he called out Herod's sins. You must have the courage of Daniel to Belteshazzar and say: God is going to kill you. Another example is quoted from Trapp: "*Father Latimer dealt no less faithfully with King Henry VIII in his sermons at Court. And being asked by the king how he dared to be so bold to preach after that manner, he answered that duty to God and to his prince had enforced him to it; and now that he had discharged his conscience, his life was in his Majesty's hands...*" Practically, today you may disobey the government also... like the government of Alberta desiring to ban parents from telling children that homosexuality is a sin. You have an obligation to disobey.

4. However, a Christian may only take up arms against the civil authority in very limited cases: If it threatens to kill you when you are innocent and you have no place to run.

3 "Do not be hasty to go from his presence. Do not take your stand for an evil thing, for he does whatever pleases him."

5. You are not to treat your civil leaders with contempt – fly off in haste when something does not go your way. Consider how wise Nathan was when King David sinned and committed adultery. Ecclesiastes 10:4 If the spirit of the ruler rises against you, Do not leave your post; For conciliation pacifies great offenses.

4 Where the word of a king is, there is power; And who may say to him, "What are you doing?"

5 He who keeps his command will experience nothing harmful; And a wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment,

5. It is God who has placed authority in the civil authorities for order's sake. You must therefore subject yourself to them and have deep respect for that power – a power that is derived from your covenant God.

Romans 13:3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.

To act to the contrary is "like grabbing bear by its tooth or a lion by its beard." You will lose.

Prepare yourself to accept for Calamities

6 Because for every matter there is a time and judgment (LAW), Though the misery of man increases greatly. 7 For he does not know what will happen; So who can tell him when it will occur?

1. There are good and bad times in life and God has a reason for each in your life. But who knows what will happen and at what time? No one! The only thing that is certain about the future is that man will find many troubles – miseries – as part of his future. Your misery might be death of a loved one, sickness, marital strife, childlessness, unemployment, etc. But the same thing is true for you...you have to accept the bad with the good...because **bad with good is good for you.**

2 While God's timing for events in your life is beyond your ability to discern or predict, man still must subject himself to God's timing and God's plans – harsh as they may seem to you. If you don't, you are bound to regret it, like King Saul who did not want to wait for God's prophet and priest to come to make sacrifices but he chose to make his own sacrifices for sins, contrary to the law of God. Samuel's lateness was a hardship to Saul and he refused to accept God's timing.

1Samuel 15: 20 And Saul said to Samuel, "But I have obeyed the voice of the LORD, and gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me, and brought back Agag king of Amalek; I have utterly destroyed the Amalekites. 21 "But the people took of the plunder, sheep and oxen, the best of the things which should have been utterly destroyed, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal."

22 Then Samuel said: "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, And to heed than the fat of rams. 23 For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king."

Sadly, ignoring of God's plans and God's timing of those plans was common in Israel and Judah Jeremiah 8:7 "Even the stork in the heavens Knows her appointed times; And the turtledove, the swift, and the swallow Observe the time of their coming. But My people do not know the judgment of the LORD.

If you don't accept God's timing and God's troubles you'll frustrate yourself. You'll become depressed. You'll become angry. You'll become obsessed with trying to solve the problem and will ignore your other duties!

3. Because of man's ignorance about the future and troubles that might take place, he needs revelation from God in order to know how to live and accept God's timing.

Proverbs 29:18 Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; But happy is he who keeps the law.

Romans 8: 28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

But what do you notice about these verses? They don't point out when troubles would end. They simply point out that God is in control and you must obey his law. You might want to know when troubles would end, but God doesn't tell you.

8 No one has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, And no one has power in the day of death. There is no release from that war, And wickedness will not deliver those who are given to it.

4. You are to subject yourself to the hard providences of God because you don't have the ability to stop God from doing what he has planned. Your lack of ability to stop God's timing is more certain than paying taxes. Try as you might, you will have to bow to the one who rules over your spirit. Henry: When the soul is required... it must resign. The soul cannot claim that its work is not yet done. It cannot escape to another jurisdiction... where death or troubles are absent. The soul can't ask for a delay. The soul can't bribe anyone or ask anyone for a pardon to escape death or troubles. Even doctors die who care for your body die, but God's plans are never thwarted.

5. Illustration : In a war you are released to go back home when you the war is done. From death and other troubles, you can expect no release...until God is ready. Even the wicked, with all the schemes with which they may come up will not be able to escape the certainty of death.

Conclusion:

First, you must submit to leaders over you because you belong to Christ and because those leaders are there by God's appointment. Second, accept what happens in your life, even if there are hard providences of God. Let God's word comfort you and guide through those trying days.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: Even though your sinful nature teaches you to rebel against legal authorities and your sinful nature teaches to reject God's hard providences, you must remember who you are. You are Christ's. He owns you. He paid the debt of your freedom, a debt you could not pay. So submit to the authorities and accept troubles in life. Do them from your desire to serve Christ and do them from your love for Christ. Yes, you will have struggles, but you don't fight alone, and you will mature through trials. Your struggles are part of your training. And God promises rewards for enduring.

Finally, you will find Jesus Christ to be a loving Savior who always does what is best for you. He is not a cruel master. If you are still outside of his kingdom you will find that the Devil, your present father, ultimately will bring you to hell. He does what is best for him... to bring company to his home. May you move your allegiances from the Devil to the Lord... and may you do it today.