



The Problem of Power

Ecclesiastes 8:1-17

Sermon Question

What is the relation of power to wisdom?

Overview of the Biblical History of Power

Unpacking the Power Dynamics in Ecclesiastes 8

Wisdom under the Power of the King's Court (v. 1-5)

Earthly Powerlessness (v. 6-9)

Injustice and Hopes in the Power Struggle (v. 10-13)

Losing Sleep and Despairing Trying to Understand it All (v. 14-17)

Power as Seen through the Cross of Christ

Conclusion

Read It

Read Ecclesiastes 8:1-17

Open It

Think about a time when you or someone else directly contradicted an authority figure in their presence. How would you evaluate the results?

Consider It

How does the statement about wisdom in verse 1 compare with the statement in verses 16-17?

Why do you think the Preacher continually seems to despair that wisdom can be grasped or anything can be made right?

Read 1 Peter 4:12-16. What does Peter say about our relationship to the government over us?

What was the example of Jesus and the early church under unrighteous laws?

What are the four things that the Preacher says we don't have power over in Ecclesiastes 8:8?

Though governments are ordained to enact righteousness, what does the Preacher observe about the wicked in Ecclesiastes 8:9-11?

Can you think of any examples of people who continue to be celebrated after death in spite of their wicked actions?

How does the Preacher counter his own argument in 8:12b-13?

How does he backpedal on that in verse 14?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:17-26 (see also v 32). How does Paul's evaluation of Jesus's victory over every authority transform the gloomy outlook of the Preacher, that we can merely hope to eat, drink, and be merry?

Live It!

Read Matthew 5:38-48 and Romans 12:14-21. What rights and power do you need to let go of, that you may love and serve others?