

Ecclesiastes 8: 1-5; “Keeping the King’s Commandment”, Sermon # 54 in the series – “Remember Your Creator”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on August 11th, 2019, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

We are told here in Chapter 8, verse 1, that if a man is wise if he knows the interpretation of a thing; that is, he knows the meaning of life. A person comes to know the meaning of life when they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Their face shall shine and beam because they have found the One who is God’s wisdom and righteousness personified. The sternness of their face changes, and they can rejoice that they have found the One who will give the interpretation of life to them. Solomon came to know Christ in His day, even though Christ had not yet come in the flesh. Agur says in Proverbs 30, verse 4 – “Who has established all the ends of the earth?” “What is His name, and what is His Son’s name?” “Surely you know!” He did not understand everything that we understand about Christ now, but He had plenty enough revealed to Him to know that there was One, the Eternal Son of God, who was very much concerned with the way that he lived in relation to God. Solomon came to know, that with as much wisdom that he had been given by God, he still needed much more. He found that greater wisdom in the Person of Christ, in relation to his being wise; in his repenting of his sins, and in praying for grace to become more holy.

In verse 2, Solomon tells us that we are to keep the king’s commandment for the sake of our oath to God.” I believe that the oath that he is speaking of is our oath of loyalty to God; to, by faith in Christ, submit to the governing authorities. When you believe in Christ, you are taking an oath of God to serve Him. And part of that service, you will be submitting to the governing authorities for the Lord’s sake. To really do good, you must first come know the Lord. And in coming to trust in the Lord, you take an oath of allegiance to God to be loyal to Him, the highest authority. Isaiah chapter 45 verse 23 says – “I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath. He shall say, ‘Surely in the Lord I have righteousness and strength.’” So, even as you have taken an oath of allegiance to God; to serve and obey Him, even so you should also pledge our allegiance to our country and honor the king. There are several reasons which are given to us here by Solomon, as to why we ought to “Keep the king’s commandment”. 1st – We ought to keep the king’s commandment for the sake of our oath to God. 2nd – Because in the word of a king, there is power. And 3rd – Because he who keeps his command will experience nothing harmful. May the Lord open our minds and our hearts to consider these truths at this time.

1st of all – We ought to keep the King’s commandment for the sake of our oath to God.
(verses 2 and 3)

“I say, ‘Keep the king’s commandment for the sake of your oath to God.’ “Do not be hasty to go from his presence.” “Do not take your stand for an evil thing, for he does whatever pleases him.” It is evident from the historical account of Solomon’s life, that he had failed miserably, at certain critical points, in keeping God’s commandments to him as a man, and as king over Israel. And yet He found mercy and grace in Christ. Christ was the “one in a thousand that he had found” (verse 28 of Chapter 7), the One Person who had not sought out many schemes. (Chapter 7, verse 29) Christ is the wisdom personified that Solomon writes about in the book of Proverbs, Chapter 8 and verse 14 – “Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom; I am understanding, I have strength.” “By me kings reign, and rulers decree justice.” “By me princes rule, and nobles, all the judges of the earth.” “I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me.”

And so, also, in Chapter 8, verse 1, he writes to us; that in coming to know the Lord; we should begin to consider that we need much more of God’s wisdom for two major reasons. First, we need God’s wisdom to interpret His providence in relation to our life, and the lives of other people around us. This needs righteous interpretation. And then we should also consider that we need wisdom to apply what we know from the Scriptures, to every particular situation that we find ourselves in. Here

in verses 2-5 we find both coupled together in the example of those who govern us politically. If we are truly wise as a believer in God, we will also fear the king. We will be concerned about the wise and righteous political governing of our nation, and our part in promoting it. Here in this chapter, Solomon is going to talk to us about political rule and government, and the wise man's responsibility, is to have respect for this institution because it is from God. A truly wise man will know how to rightly interpret his or her own responsibility in relation to human government. All of our responsibility is summed up in this phrase – "Keep the king's commandment".

Governments were ruled by kings in that day. And in that day, if you were going to work closely in any connection to the king, or be involved in government, an oath of allegiance was taken by them. Today, it is not different. We are to submit to all the good and righteous laws of our government, and to the people who are placed in government; all the while realizing, that our greatest and highest allegiance is to God. God will interact with the king. God is sovereign over the hearts of men to accomplish His good purposes. Proverbs 21: 1 – "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of water; He turns it wherever He wishes." God will direct the king, and He will even save the king if it is according to His purpose. Our duty is to keep our oath to God. This means that we are always striving to do God's will in relation to the laws of our land, and the authority of people in the government. Our oath to God, which we take when we are baptized, or when we speak our solemn promise to Him to follow Him and keep His commandments by the grace which Christ supplies, is also really the basis of all good government being established.

Today, you and I who live in the United States of America do not live under a monarchical government. We live under a Constitutional government with three branches; the Presidency (the Executive branch), the Congress (or Legislative branch), and the Supreme Court, the Judicial branch. These 3 branches of government were intended, by the Founding Fathers, to work together to provide a government which is "of the people, by the people, and for the people." People working together to represent all the people in doing good and right things. This righteous form of government is a Biblical concept; the people electing or making a particular man their king or their leader. And according to the Book of the Law, it was to be done in connection with whomever the Lord would choose for them.

Deuteronomy 17: 14 says, "When you come to the land which the Lord your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,' you shall surely set a king over you whom the Lord chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother." This was injunction was given so that hopefully the right kind of man would come to lead God's people. The right kind of man would be one who fears God and walks in His commandments.

2nd – We should keep the king's commandment because – In the word of a king, there is power. (verse 4)

"Where the word of king is, there is power; and who may say to him, 'What are you doing?'" The king has been given power by God, and he has the freedom under God, to use it to promote what is good and right in the sight of God and men. It is the kind of power, which if used in a righteous way; should not be questioned. In cases where sin reigns in the heart of a ruler, the man or woman will act as if they ought not to be questioned, because they believe that they are not accountable to anyone. And thus, they may be tempted to abuse this power in many situations. This is the definition of tyranny. The division of power in our government hopefully provides a safeguard against the person who might be, or might become, a tyrannical ruler. This has happened many times in the past in other nations where the king ruled unchecked by man. God always has the power to check a king or remove him altogether, and we must be wise in what we submit to, in relation to the king.

Daniel Chapter 2, verse 20 says – "Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His." "And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings; He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding." Daniel learned this very practically under a king who was prone to abuse His authority. During this present Church age,

many wise people saw that because many kings had abused their power and ruled over men in ungodly ways; they eventually saw that it would be the better part of wisdom to check that power, and put it into the hands of the people. But even the people can collectively be unwise at many points. And so, even under our better form of government, we still have the responsibility given to us by God, to pray for those who are elected, and those who govern us. And further, we have the responsibility to submit to those elected officials, unless they are asking us to violate the commandments of God. They should be honored for their office even if we do not agree with everything that they do and say.

You can see this if you will turn with me to 1st Peter 2: 13. “Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.” The “ordinance” of man is the institution of government, which God has sovereignly helped us to raise up, on both the National and the State level. (The king, and his governors; governing the various provinces.) We as Christians are to submit to it “for the Lord’s sake”. That is; we are to submit to it so that good things (things which are morally good in accordance with God’s law) can be promoted for all men, and the punishment of evildoers will indeed take place. That is the purpose of government. Therefore it is very important that we elect people to political office who are righteous in the sight of God and men. For otherwise, how will they make decisions in accord with God’s will, and the good of the people.

Turn over to 2nd Samuel Chapter 23, verse 1. “Now these are the last words of David.” “Thus says David the son of Jesse; thus says the man raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel: “The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue.” “The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me: ‘He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.’ “And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain.” Here we find the major qualifications needed to have a good king or a good political ruler. He must be just, and he must rule in the fear of God.

Here we also find God’s requirement for good leaders and leadership. They should not simply be business savvy, but they should be morally discerning people. To be a good leader, great giftedness or ability in whatever field of endeavor you have pursued, is not the most important thing. Not even great insight into natural and earthly things is the most important qualification; but rather, that person must be righteous. All the natural gifts of intelligence and insight may be very valuable, and helpful to many, but there is something more than this which is needed. That person must be right before God. A man or a woman only becomes right before God when they believe in His word and the promises of God; and more specifically, by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Rock of Israel.

A righteous man fears God and turns away from evil. A righteous man has regard for all of God’s statutes and is not interested in binding up men under his own rules. Whatever laws he legislates, are for the sake of the Lord, and to promote what is good among men. Whatever judgments he renders, he does so for the Lord. Turn to 2nd Chronicles 19, verse 1. “Then Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned safely to his house in Jerusalem.” “And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to King Jehoshaphat, ‘Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord?’” (by the way, that is the definition of bad government.) “Therefore the wrath of the Lord is upon you.” “Nevertheless good things are found in you, in that you have removed the wooden images from the land, and have prepared your heart to seek God.” “So Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem; and he went out again among the people from Beersheba to the mountains of Ephraim, and brought them back to the Lord God of their fathers.” “Then he set judges in the land throughout all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, and said to the judges, “Take heed to what you are doing, for you do not judge for man but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment.” “Now therefore, let the fear of the Lord be upon you; take care and do it, for there is no iniquity with the Lord our God, no partiality, nor taking of bribes.”

Now this is truly good government, when the fear of the Lord is upon the person ruling and judging. Jehoshaphat had previously sinned in allying himself by marriage with wicked Ahab. And, he had gone out to do battle with Ahab against Ramoth-Gilead, and the Lord so ordered things that Ahab died in that battle. He had heard the prophecy of Micaiah against Ahab, that he would fall in that battle and not return in peace, and he did not. Jehoshaphat repented of his alliance with this wicked man and he removed the idolatrous wooden images from the land, and he prepared his heart to seek God. Then he instituted this good government. This is what all of us hearing this, or reading this, should participate in doing, as much as we are able to, under our Constitutional government. We should elect public officials, who as far as we can determine, are intent on doing good and right things; of judging rightly, and legislating righteous laws and ordinances.

Then 3rd – The Person who keeps the king’s command will experience nothing harmful.

Verse 5 says, “He who keeps the king’s command will experience nothing harmful; and a wise man’s heart discerns both time and judgment.” You are probably still in 2nd Chronicles Chapter 19, and so look at verse 8. Verses 8 and following are a good representation of the truth of verse 5 of our study tonight. “Moreover in Jerusalem, for the judgment of the Lord and for controversies, Jehoshaphat appointed some of the Levites and priests, and some of the chief fathers of Israel, when they returned to Jerusalem.” “And he commanded them, saying, “Thus you shall act in the fear of the Lord, faithfully and with a loyal heart: Whatever case comes to you from your cities, whether of bloodshed or offenses against law or commandment, against statutes or ordinances, you shall warn them, lest they trespass against the Lord and wrath come upon you and your brethren.” “Do this, and you will not be guilty.” “And take notice: Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the Lord; and Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king’s matters; also the Levites will be officials before you.” “Behave courageously, and the Lord will be with the good.”

Ah, what a precious passage this is, on the role of spiritual things in regard to the exercise of political offices and appointments. Jehoshaphat, in order that he and his officials, both civil and ecclesiastical, would judge “for the Lord”. They appointed that certain of the Levites and priests, and some of the chief fathers in Israel, would act in the fear of the Lord. They would be faithful to take the truth of God’s word, and with a loyal heart to God first, they would then be loyal to the king under God, second. They would speak righteously in their judgments, to the various cases which were brought to their attention. These Levites and priests, and some of the chief fathers in Israel, men who had spiritual discernment, and who were loyal to God and to the king, would speak up and warn all the people involved, in cases of bloodshed or of offenses against the law, or God’s commandments. They warned them lest the wrath of God come upon them. If they warned them, then they would not be guilty before God, or the king who was trying to faithfully represent Him.

This was good government then. And it is good government now; when men who hold office in the political realm will listen to the reproofs of the preachers of God’s Word, and then set their hearts to seek God for themselves; and then that they would go about the business of legislating and judging righteously for the Lord, for the good of the nation. O let us pray that God will have mercy upon us in just this way, so that wrath will not come upon us any further than it has, and that we will elect Presidents and Congressmen, Senators and Judges, who will not judge for man, but for the Lord. Solomon used to command his son to keep his commandments, which were the commandments of the greater King who is God. This is what he said in Proverbs 3, verses 21 and following. “My son, let them not depart from your eyes – keep sound wisdom and discretion; so they will be life to your soul and grace to your neck.” “Then you will walk safely in your way, and your foot will not stumble.” “When you lie down, you will not be afraid; yes you will lie down and your sleep will be sweet.” “Do not be afraid of sudden terror, nor of trouble from the wicked when it comes; for the Lord will be your confidence, and will keep your foot from being caught.” He who keeps these commands of this king will experience no harm.

