

Ecclesiastes 8:1-8

Though there is clear break between the chapters, there is a still a close tie. The term “wise” and “wisdom” which were found thirteen times in the previous chapter continue. Though man has sought out many schemes and inventions(7:29), which have made the true use of wisdom a frustrating and lonely experience, the wisdom from God still leads to a far better life “*under the sun*,” and much more so into eternity. In this chapter, he will discuss things that enhance the value of wisdom, yet once again reveal that “*under the sun*” such wisdom will not always help us avoid problems or even lose our life.

- 1 One of the greatest value wisdom confers is the wonderful benefits to the heart and soul of those who possess it, which no one else can see. They make the face shine and remove the sternness. Regardless of how many problems life brings and how little our wisdom can do to remove them, wisdom is still precious and brings great inner peace. Even if it can't solve it, wisdom will help understand and thus endure it. 8:1
- 2 Regardless of the type of government, and regardless of whether it is fair or unfair, if we want our “life under the sun” to be as pleasant as possible we must submit to its authority. Even if it is bringing great bitterness and sorrow, there is no alternative but to remain passive and wait for God to deal with it. 8:2-8
- 3 Though civil government may fail to do its duty and men are set to do evil, though the wicked are buried and forgotten with seemingly no consequences from civil government or from God, it will be well with those who fear God and it will not be well with the wicked. 8:9-13
- 4 The vanity(futility) of “life under the sun’s” incomprehensible moral workings are again considered and the conclusions set forth. Righteous men receive the consequences that the wicked are due “under the sun” and the wicked often receive the reward one would expect that God would give to the righteous. Since there is often no consistency to life’s rewards/punishments all good men can do is enjoy each day as it comes as a gift from God and expect no more. 8:14-15
- 5 There is no formula to “life under the sun!” No key to success! No wisdom or lifestyle that will guarantee long life or permanent success! Man can't find it out! Though men may claim the wisdom to know it, they cannot find it out! Sooner or later, the claims of those who think they have it all figured out will be proven false! 8:16-17

1. Who is like a wise man?

There is clearly a comparison here between someone and a wise man. Perhaps this is the one man among the thousand he had been seeking for. So he asked each reader to offer the characteristics that would make the reader or anyone else like a wise man. When speaking “*under the sun*” what would a man have to do to be like a wise man? Who in their own mind is like such a man? “Wisdom is the *“mastery of the art of living in accordance with God's expectations.”* It described one who *“fearing God, lives in accordance with what God expects,”* and can apply *“wisdom to every situation in life.”* Who is like that? Who has mastered the art of living “*under the sun*” in accord with God’s expectations as set forth in His Word? Who can apply wisdom to every situation of “life under the sun?” With all its varied twists and turns, and unexpected rises and falls, truly, who is like a wise man.

Yet this is the goal! The end that Koheleth and all of us ought to be striving for. Being a wise man is a worthy goal to attain. There really is no higher attainment to be found. And this is a universal truth. True both “*under the sun*” and into eternity, the life that now is and the one that is to come. Wisdom is the greatest and most valuable of all possessions.

Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding; 14 For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, And her gain than fine gold. 15 She is more precious than rubies, And all the things you may desire cannot compare her. 16 Length of days is in her right hand, In her left

hand riches and honor. 17 Her ways are ways of pleasantness, And all her paths are peace. 18 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, And happy are all who retain her. Prov 3:13-18

Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth. 6 Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; Love her, and she will keep you. 7 Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding. 8 Exalt her, and she will promote you; She will bring you honor, when you embrace her. 9 She will place on your head an ornament of grace; A crown of glory she will deliver to you." Prov 4:5-9

Receive my instruction, and not silver, And knowledge rather than choice gold; 11 For wisdom is better than rubies, And all the things one may desire cannot be compared with her. Prov 8:10-11

And who knows the interpretation of a thing?

Since Hebrew poetry rhymes thoughts this is the Holy Spirit's elaboration on what a truly wise man can do. He knows the interpretation of a thing. The term "interpretation" is defined:

peshher... *interpretation*, solution (BDB #6592)

peshher ... to explain, interpret, to make interpretation... (Wilson p 231)

When one can find the "solution" and then "explain" it he is truly wise. All that comes into ones life must be interpreted and explained. Until we can do this we can't really know if it is a blessing a temptation, an adversity, or an opportunity to grow. This is exactly what Solomon has written the book of Ecclesiastes to accomplish for us. It gives us the proper way to interpret all the difficult things. But without the wisdom conferred by the Holy Spirit through inspiration, even Solomon could not have known the interpretation.

When one can take all the things of life "under the sun," the good and the bad, the expected and the unexpected, and interpret them properly in light of eternity in order to take the right course, they have found true wisdom. Note again the definition of wisdom. "Mastery of the art of living in accordance with God's expectations." When one can do this, he will know the interpretation of a thing. Even the term "know" emphasizes this. It speaks of things that are "observed" or "experienced." Knowledge that comes from either "experience with the senses," "by investigating and proving," or "by reflection and consideration." Who is able to do this? Who is able to "experience with the senses," and find the solution and explanation? Who is able "by investigating and proving" to come to a solution and explanation. Or, who is able "by reflection and consideration" to come find the answer and interpretation? The answer is only those who fear God and hearken to His knowledge.

A man's wisdom makes his face shine,

The difficult thing about this passage is the use of the term "make his face shine." Since a face cannot literally shine (like the sun), it is an idiom used to describe a certain characteristic. Yet a careful review of the definition makes it clear that this is not a literal shining. It describes things that "become light," "become bright," "become lighted up," and "give light."

215 'owr- to be light or to become light, to shine ... to shine (used of the sun) 3) to become bright b) (in the Niphal) 1) to be illuminated 2) to become lighted up c) (in the Hiphil) 1) to give light, shine (used of the sun, the moon, and the stars) 4) to enlighten (used of the eyes, His law, etc.) 5) to make (cause) to shine (used of the face) BDB)

Something that affected the emotions, mood, and attitude and then reflected it out on to the countenance. A man's face will change from being stern to shining based upon an upbeat mood, optimism, and a conviction that all will be well. This is what "mastery of the art of living in accordance with God's expectations." will do for us. When a man has this kind of wisdom will affect his mood, emotions and countenance. Wilson's definition brings this out.

"... to be or become light, to shine, or to be bright; of the eyes of one fainting when he recovers; to lighten, to make light, to illuminate; to make light one's countenance, to cause it to shine, i.e. to cheer, to enliven; spoken especially of God, as regarding men with serene and propitious countenance..."

Most of his definition is based on the other places where this term is used in the Old Testament.

"Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, 'This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them: 24 "The Lord bless you and keep you; 25 The Lord make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you; 26 The Lord lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace." 27 "So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them." Num 6:23-27

Make Your face shine upon Your servant; Save me for Your mercies' sake. Ps 31:16 (see also Ps 67:1; 119:135; Isa 60:1)

The children of Aaron were commanded to bless the children of Israel with a specific statement. This statement was to remind them that they were to look at the LORD as someone who would bless and keep them, and someone they could look up to as one with a face that was shining down upon them and whose countenance was lifted up toward them. What else could we think of in such a situation than a face that is glad to see us and happy to help. With this as the background of the term, when a man's face is made to shine, it refers first to a disposition of contentment and happiness, and secondly a countenance that is ready to bless, love and help others, seeking their highest good, and striving to be kind and compassionate to all.

And the sternness of his face is changed.

The sternness of a face is open to some interpretation because of the ambiguity of the term. It is translated: "sternness" (NKJV/NAS) "hardness" (ASV/ESV), "boldness" (KJV) "hard appearance" (NIV).

The reason for the broad spectrum in the translation is because that's how broadly the word is used in the OT Scriptures. It is often translated "might," "strength," "power" "strong," etc. Of it's 91 uses in the OT, this is the only time it is applied to the face.

˘oz or (fully) ˘owz- might, strength a) material or physical b) personal or social or political (BDB # 5797)

˘oz(oze); or (fully) ˘owz(oze)...strength in various applications(force, security, majesty, praise) (Strongs # 5797)

How does a face show "might" and "strength?" How does it show "force" or "majesty?" Since wisdom changes or alters this face, it is obviously not a compliment. This must therefore be the strength of pride, arrogance, selfishness and boldness. The countenance of a self-centered fool gradually giving way to the countenance of a wise and unselfish sage. Wisdom so tempers the understanding and outlook on life that it is seen on the face.

As new ways of looking at things replace old ways and one sees clearly their place in God's creation regarding what they can and cannot enjoy, what they can and cannot change, what they have to hope for in the future, they take on an entirely different outlook on life. This has a profound affect on their temperament and personality, and thus on their countenance and demeanor.

How Wisdom Helps us Deal with Rulers

Koheleth did the deep research into many areas of life. One of the things that has a great impact on life and which no one has control is civil government. It can be the greatest of blessings of the most terrible of curses. The subject of rulers and oppression has already been discussed several times in the book.

Then I returned and considered all the oppression that is done under the sun: And look! The tears of the oppressed, But they have no comforter — On the side of their oppressors there is power, But they have no comforter. Therefore I praised the dead who were already dead, More than the living who are still alive. 3 Yet, better than both is he who has never existed, Who has not seen the evil work that is done under the sun. Eccl 4:1-3

If you see the oppression of the poor, and the violent perversion of justice and righteousness in a province, do not marvel at the matter; for high official watches over high official, and higher officials are over them. Eccl 5:8

Surely oppression destroys a wise man's reason, And a bribe debases the heart. Eccl 7:7

What does a righteous man do when he sees oppression in the courts(judgment), oppression in

taxes, oppression in the way in which the ruler(dictator) chooses to live his life and exercise his authority over his subjects. When Israel asked for a king God warned them of the severe taxes and conscription they would face. He knew they would regret the day they had chosen a king, but warned them that if they persisted in their rebellion at this moment , He would not listen to them later when problems arose.

Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who asked him for a king. 11 And he said, "This will be the behavior of the king who will reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for his own chariots and to be his horsemen, and some will run before his chariots. 12 He will appoint captains over his thousands and captains over his fifties, will set some to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and some to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. 13 He will take your daughters to be perfumers, cooks, and bakers. 14 And he will take the best of your fields, your vineyards, and your olive groves, and give them to his servants. 15 He will take a tenth of your grain and your vintage, and give it to his officers and servants. 16 And he will take your male servants, your female servants, your finest young men, and your donkeys, and put them to his work. 17 He will take a tenth of your sheep. And you will be his servants. 18 And you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, and the Lord will not hear you in that day." 1 Sam 8:10-18

Yet this is the least of the kind of oppression that can occur. Just and wise men often stand in fear and dismay as they watch the wicked movements of civil authority. No nation is immune from it. But what is a wise man to do in such times? Is it God's desire that His servants play the role of plotting treason and overthrow making themselves traitors in trying to overthrow a governments each time it moves out of harmony with God's law? Should God's people be in the vanguard of civil disobedience, should they be rebellious and protesting every and any cause they strikes them as being unwise?

2. I say, Keep the king's commandment

This answer may startle us, but it is consistent throughout the Scriptures. God does not want His people involved in subversion and rebellion. They are to submit to all authority whether it is just or unjust, tyrannical or fair. The term "keep" is used in the sense of "tending and taking care of," "watching over," "observe," or with "another verb ... can signify carefully or watchfully doing that action."

shamar, "to keep, tend, watch over, retain." This verb occurs in most Semitic languages (biblical Aramaic attests only a noun formed from this verb). Biblical Hebrew attests it about 470 times and in every period. *shamar* means "to keep" in the sense of "tending" and taking care of. So God put Adam "into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" Gen. 2:15... The word also means "to keep" in the sense of "watching over" or giving attention to. David, ironically chiding Abner for not protecting Saul, says: "Art not thou a valiant man? and who is like to thee in Israel? wherefore then hast thou not kept thy lord the king?" 1 Sam. 26:15. In extended application this emphasis comes to mean "to watch, observe"... Another extended use of the verb related to this emphasis appears in covenantal contexts. In such cases "keep" means "to watch over" in the sense of seeing that one observes the covenant, keeping one to a covenant. God says of Abraham: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment..." Gen. 18:19... When used in close connection with another verb, *shamar* can signify carefully or watchfully doing that action... In a third group of passages this verb means "to keep" in the sense of saving or "retaining."(Vine's #8104)

Though it is not a verb, but a noun, it appears from the context that it is the kings commandment that is to be carefully or watchfully done. What the king utters are the ideas and plans of his heart. All must submit to these things if they are to be successful "under the sun," as well as being pleasing to God. This is the same advice that Paul and Peter gave under the New Covenant.

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. 2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. 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. 4 For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who

practices evil. 5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. 7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. Rom 13:1-7

Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, 14 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. 15 For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men — 16 as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. 17 Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king. 1Pet 2:13-17

It is doubtful that there was a more corrupt government than the one Paul and Peter lived under. There were abuses and corruption, immorality and subversion, and even persecution of God's people, yet they were to submit and not subvert. This is God's way. He puts governments in and He will take them out. He does not want us to do anything but carefully observe and keep the commands of "every human institution."

This is why the face of the wise man can shine even under oppression and trying circumstances. It is not his responsibility to try and change such things. Only to obey the commands and regulations. When we understand what God expects us to try and change and what we are not to attempt to change, but leave to him, we can release our own conscience and simply do the best we can.

for the sake of your oath to God.

Loyalty to a king and to a country play a large role in the entire human race. It is a part of natural affection to feel patriotism and love for one's country. Traitors are looked upon as the blackest of characters, and treason is generally punishable by death. Men see it this way and it is true. Many countries demand an oath of loyalty or fealty be taken. Though not all countries require this oath, every man and woman of wisdom who fears God sees this oath as unspoken but firmly established. It is for the sake of this oath (whether expressed or not) that all who live successfully "under the sun" must keep the commands of whatever government they are under. This is what is restated in Romans "there is no authority except from God," "those which exist are established by God," "he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God" "are servants of God", "it is a minister of God to you for good," "rulers are servants of God," and in Peter "submit yourselves for the Lord's sake" We do not submit because they are right or wrong, fair or unfair, good or evil. We submit for the sake of the oath, for the sake of God's order, and in submission to God's will in allowing them to be in that position.

3. Do not be hasty to go from his presence.

The differences in the translations here once again captures the difficulty of the term "presence." It is translated "to leave him" in the NAS and "to go out of his sight" in the KJV. The term is the same one that was translated "face" in verse one. It refers to the face, the presence, and the sight of someone. Just as Cain and Jonah sought to live out of the "presence" (same word as here) of Jehovah

Then Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden. Gen 4:16

But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. ... 10 Then the men were exceedingly afraid, and said to him, "Why have you done this?" For the men knew that he fled from the presence of the Lord, because he had told them. Jonah 1:3

Neither Cain nor Jonah were able to leave God's presence in any real sense, but they did in their own hearts, by refusing to acknowledge Him as God and submit to Him.

Since the contrast Koheleth is making is between being in the presence of the king or taking one's

stand for an evil thing, it appears that loyalty to the king and his commands and taking a stand by his side in allegiance is the real issue. Do not be quick to remove your allegiance and loyalty from the king, do not be quick to take your stand against him. It is not wisdom but folly to violate the king's commands and make oneself an outlaw. It can not lead to happiness, but to a loss of liberty and life.

Do not take your stand for an evil thing, for he does whatever pleases him.

It is interesting that "stand" in Hebrew has the same basic and figurative meanings that it does in English. Its primary meaning is "to stand upright" in the sense of being up on one's feet. Its secondary meaning is "to take one's stand," "to be established," be "immovable."

amad, "to take one's stand; stand here or be there; stand still." Outside biblical Hebrew, where it occurs about 520 times and in all periods, this verb is attested only in Akkadian ("to stand, lean on")... The basic meaning of this verb is "to stand upright." This is its meaning in Gen. 18:8, its first biblical occurrence. It is what a soldier does while on watch 2 Sam. 18:30. From this basic meaning comes the meaning "to be established, immovable, and standing upright" on a single spot; (Vines # 5975)

Taking a stand for something implies a commitment in the heart and a decision of the mind to take a position. Koheleth is warning against taking a stand for evil. This is a term that takes in that which is "bad," or even "wicked." It can be "morally evil or hurtful," "bad" or unpleasant in the sense of giving pain or unhappiness." It is also "the antithesis of shalom"

Committing oneself to doing something that is evil and wrong could mean violating any of the laws of the civil government. It could mean deciding to become a thief or a murderer, and thus taking one's stand outside of the law. Though this could be its meaning, there seems to be a much narrower idea here.

The evil has something to do with the king being able to do "whatever pleases him" while verse five speaks of someone asking him, "what are you doing?" It appears that the real issue here is that of moral and ethical judgements of right and wrong and of what is best. Things that good men do not always agree upon and which sometimes though the king is obviously wrong in what he is about to do, cannot be convinced otherwise. When such a situation arises, "He does whatever pleases him," "there is power in his word" and "who can say what are you doing?" Though God allows His people the right not to participate, He does not give them the right to overthrow the government! Peter only said "we must obey God rather than men." He did not say You have no right to rule because of what you did to Jesus. We may pay the price of death for not participating, but we must not pay the price for treason!

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. 14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter. 1 Peter 4:12-17

Regardless of the reason, when the choice is made to stop the king, it is an evil choice. Our nation tolerates civil disobedience, but God does not. We are not to take a stand against the power of any government. Whether it be in a particular matter or to actually overthrow the government is not the issue. Anything that can raise the ire of a king should not be stood up for. It is folly to take a stand on a thing which violates the king's decree and will thus raise his anger. He does whatever pleases him. He can take your possessions, take your family from you, make you a slave. He can put you in prison, he can declare the death sentence upon you. He has unlimited power.

Though those who live in a democracy, may not fear terrible consequences, the quality of allegiance and submission expected by God has not. God still expects our obedience and submission even though the physical threat for disobedience has been removed. God's children must respect his authority and respect those whom he has placed in authority.

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

The world we live in is so foreign to this type of thinking that it is difficult for us to understand it. Yet outside of America, England and Western Europe, it still holds sway. Though we look at this as the abnormal, it has been the norm throughout the history in most nations. The freedom of speech, and other freedoms we enjoy in this nation are the exception and not the rule. So many in this country have allowed this power to go to their head, and make them fools. They do things that ought not to be done because they have been lulled by such security. Yet in many places on earth the authority of a king is supreme. What he says is the rule, and you do not antagonize or in any way anger him. In such places, no one can say to him "what are you doing?" When people live in a monarchy, they are wise to submit to the commands of the king no matter how oppressive they are. This is the way to live a tranquil and quiet life in spite of the turmoil around them. Children of God are not afflicted with the foolish notion that everything must be perfect "under the sun." They know that the crooked cannot be made straight and the wanting cannot be numbered (Ecc 1:14-15). They know that there will be oppression and the God sees it and will deal with it. It does not rest with them. They look to the wisdom and power of God in such matters.

5. He who keeps his command will experience nothing harmful;

This is the most important aspect of all the advice here given. Those who decide on social change, on seeing that oppressive governments are going to be destroyed and that all policies which are unfair are removed are setting themselves up for serious troubles in this life. As in verse three, there is a difficult line to draw. This verse could be taken to teach that at no time should we ever violate the laws of a king. As was pointed out earlier, there are times when we must take a stand for God at whatever cost to ourselves. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were placed in such a position and made the right choice, but they did not seek to overthrow the government. They only sought to obey God. So also with Daniel, when told to stop praying to God, he did not seek to overthrow the king or the law, he only did what he knew was right.

But when we find ourselves able to serve God and fulfill our duties, and a circumstance arises we do not agree with, we should keep his command, and leave the rest to God. When it is a matter of injustice or corruption that we are not forced to participate in, then the wisest course is to simply leave it alone and keep the commands of the king. If it can be voted out, if it can be elected out, then do so, if one must disobey the laws of the land to see social change, then a child of God must have no part in it. This is in our own best interests. When an oppressive law or government is in existence, and it has no real affect on our spiritual or moral relationship to God, generally the only thing one can do by fighting it is to bring harm on themselves and their family. There is a time for every purpose under heaven. God will take care of the extreme injustices of men. Leave it to Him.

*Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.
Rom 13:3-4*

And a wise man's heart discerns both time and judgment.

The wise man does not let such oppression sway him from his obedience and loyalty to God and to the civil government under which he lives. The wise man's heart discerns this. His heart discerns both time and judgement. The term time is the same one used back in chapter three "*there is a time for every purpose.*" Time means "*a period of time*" "*appointed time*" and "*season.*" It also means an "*appropriate time*" or an "*opportunity.*" It was used over and over in Chapter Three as "*a time to... and a time to ...*" The wise man's heart discerns and understands this. He knows that God has a time for such things to happen and a time to rectify and fix them. This is what allows him to let such things pass, since he knows God does not need his help in such circumstances.

Not only does a wise man understand time and how God works within it, he also understands "judgment." He discerns that it is God who will take the role of "*sitting as a judge, hearing a case, and rendering a proper verdict.*"

mishpat, "judgment; rights." This noun, which appears around 420 times, also appears in Ugaritic. This word has two main senses; the first deals with the act of sitting as a judge, hearing a case, and

rendering a proper verdict. Eccl. 12:14 is one such occurrence: "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." *mishpat* can also refer to the "rights" belonging to someone..." (Vine's # 4941)

But there is a time for judgment. The wise man gives place to the time when God deals with injustice and evil. God has told us what He wants His people to do.

You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord. Lev 19:18

Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Rom 12:17-19

A wise man knows all this and is patient. He bears wrongs, and is mistreated, but does not seek retribution against the government which passes it upon him. He gives place to the wrath of God. He knows that there is a time when God will deal with it.

6. Because for every matter there is a time and judgment,

This is a universal truth which must be accepted by God's servants who wish to have the wisdom that will make their face shine. God will take care of it in His own time and in His own way. There are too many factors and variables which only God knows for His people to fret over how and when God is going to do something. Mark it down, there is a time and a judgment for every matter. Jesus stressed this in the gospels. It may come here and it may not. It may come in our lifetime and it may not. But one of the absolutes even in life "under the sun" is that there is a time and judgment for every matter.

God has a time and a judgment for every matter. We see how this worked during the time of the apostles in Jerusalem. They knew when they had to take a stand and when they simply had to accept the customs of an oppressive government. They accepted slavery, oppressive taxes, and the confiscation of their possessions. They did not compromise their obedience to God. But through all this they did not seek to overthrow the Jewish or Roman government. Paul accepted his imprisonment, and death, and lived to the very end His own inspired words in Romans 13. He trusted in God with his whole heart, and did not lean on his own understanding.

Though the misery of man increases greatly.

The meaning of this clause rests on the term "though," which is generally used to give the reason, purpose or time behind a preceding statement. It is translated "because" in the ASV, "therefore" in the KJV, "when" in the NAS, and "though" in the NIV and NKJ.

*kî ... as though, as, because that, but, certainly, except, for, surely, since, that, then, when, etc. (ASV and RSV similar.) ... **A particle expressing a temporal, causal, or objective relationship among clauses** expressed or unexpressed. In Hebrew *kî* is used in four ways:(1) to introduce an objective clause especially after verbs of seeing, saying, etc. and translated "that";(2) to introduce a temporal clause and translated "when" (some of these are almost conditional clauses, thus making "if" appropriate); (3) to introduce a causal clause, "because, for, since"; (4) and with *'im* to express the reason why some case might not occur "except, but rather." In all four usages *kî* introduces a given which is the result of some other fact or action or will influence some other fact or action. Some would add an asseverative usage giving emphasis to what follows. TDWNT: #3588*

There are slight differences of meaning in the clause if we take it to be the reason for the preceding instead of the consequence, but only of time. He is either affirming that man must submit to the above even though it increases his misery(NKJ/NIV), or he is stating that there must be a time and a judgment for every matter "because" the misery of man increases greatly and sooner or later God must act. Since both of these are true and taught elsewhere in Scripture(the former by Paul, Peter, Daniel and Shadrach Meshach and Abednego and the latter in the rich man and Lazarus), it is not of great importance to figure out which one is taught

Suffice it to say that all godly servants of the Lord must do both. They must give place to God's

vengeance knowing that He will repay and yet submit in well doing to a faithful Creator:

Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Rom 12:19

Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator. 1 Pet 4:19

There is therefore no limit to how much men must take. No matter how hostile and oppressive a government might become, God does not want His servants involved in insurrection. He doesn't want them breaking laws to some higher end or doing evil that good may come (Rom 3:8). The misery of man can increase greatly. The poverty and sorrow which some live under is testimony to that truth. How much shall be taken until the oath be broken? How much can a dictator do before one can forget the commands of God and take matters into their own hands. Well, though the misery of man increases greatly, he must still continue to be submissive to God. God will take care of the wicked people who have done evil (vengeance), as well as our souls.

7. For he does not know what will happen; So who can tell him when it will occur?

The last two verses of this section have thoughts with universal application. This makes it tempting to broaden them out to discuss more than the subject of oppression, civil government and the responsibilities of the righteous servant of the Lord when he sees such things. But this must be resisted. The subject has not really changed. He brings it up again in verse nine, "one man rules over another to his own hurt."

No one knows what tomorrow will bring. The future is veiled and can not be predicted. We simply do not know when or how God is going to intervene. When Habakkuk complained to God about the conditions he was forced to live in, God informed him that he was even then preparing the Chaldeans to destroy Judah (Hab 1:1-17). Moses attempt to overthrow Egypt failed for it was not in God's time, but 40 years later God came to him to release his people from bondage.

It is futile to interfere with God's direct workings with civil authorities. Gamaliel's advice to the Jews fits well here.

And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; 39 but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it — lest you even be found to fight against God." Acts 5:38-39

Since we do not know what will happen, we should never violate God's laws to bring about change. It may fail, and nothing will change except we have become a sinner and an outlaw. It may be that God himself plans a change and our efforts are useless and pointless and simply show rebellion against him. Man does not know what or when things will happen. He does not know what will succeed and what will fail. One thing he knows.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and depart from evil. 8 It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones. Prov 3:5-8

Since he does not know what will occur, who can tell him when it will occur? With such limited knowledge, we ought to have the good sense to leave things in the capable hands of God.

8. No one has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, And no one has power in the day of death.

Koheleth now brings up three more reasons why it is futile to interfere in God's working with the nations. Death is the mightiest of all oppressors. There is no fighting it. When the spirit begins to leave the body, there is no one who has the power to control it. This is a terrible thought the first time one ponders and comprehends it. Yet when one humbles themselves under the mighty hand of God and gives all things into the hands of him who does have the power then once again their face can shine. When Paul faced the oppression of civil government unfairly wielding the greatest of all its power in removing our spirit from the earth through death, he placed his fate into the hands of God.

For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. 2Tim 1:12

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. 16 At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them. 17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. 18 And the Lord will deliver me from every evil work and preserve me for His heavenly kingdom. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen! 2 Tim 4:6-8 16-18

The man whose face shines through with wisdom has accepted this truth, and lives accordingly. That is exactly what Stephen did as he was falsely charged with blasphemy.

And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel. Acts 6:15

A wise man knows he cannot stop the power man wields over his body and spirit but has so adjusted his life that all this is taken into account. We are but vapors appearing for a little while.

10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up. ... 14 Whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. 15 Instead you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that." 16 But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. James 4:10, 14-16

No one is wise who does not take this into account and live in accord with it. No one can control the spirit's departure, and no one has power over the day of their death. The do not know when it will be or how it will be and they cannot select it.

There is no discharge in that war,

The term "discharge" is defined.

"mishlachath, mish-lakh'-ath; fem of 4916; a mission, i.e. (abstr. and favorable) release, or (concr. and unfavorable) an army: - discharge, sending." (Strong # 4917)

The idea is that there is no favorable outcome in that war. The fight for the soul in the day of death by the body in order to retain life is always lost. There has never once been a favorable outcome. Though the body fights for life, it cannot win. We must be ready every day for that battle to be lost.

and wickedness will not deliver those who are given to it.

Coupled with this truth is another absolute truth. Wickedness never delivers those who are given to it. It might give a temporary release and truce to those who seek to use it, but always in the end those who use wickedness to deliver and extricate themselves from troubles always bring greater woes upon them. It is folly to choose this path. It may seem good, but it ends in death(Pr. 16:25). Do not select that path for seeking ways out of trouble. It will never succeed. It is as fruitless as seeking to fight death itself.

His point has been powerfully made. It is the responsibility of all men to be loyal and submissive to their government. Even when they oppress and do evil, it is always futile to fight oppression with rebellion or sin. God has a time for everything, and we must submit and humble ourselves under his plan. We do not know what tomorrow will bring and we do not have the power to even keep our own soul from death. We must not pick a fight here for we cannot win it.

Ecclesiastes 8:9-17

Verse nine forms the bridge between the thoughts of 1-8 and those of 10-13. He is summing up his thoughts and preparing the reader for what is to come. In the ASV the paragraph break is placed after verse 8, while the NAS places it after verse nine. In all fairness it could go either place. It perfectly sums up what he has just discussed in 1-8, while at the same time it prepares the reader for the next subject.

9. All this I have seen, and applied my heart to every work that is done under the sun:

The term “seen” has the meaning of “observe,” “examine,” “discover,” or “gain understanding,” leading to one’s being able to “perceive,” “realize,” or “get acquainted with” it. In this case, Koheleth has done extensive research (See comments on Ecc 4:1). He has seen examples of all the things spoken of above.

1. He has seen oppressive governments and the misery it brought to men.
2. He has seen men tempted to overthrow a king because they felt it best.
3. He has seen them destroyed because the king was more powerful than they thought.
4. He has seen wise men watching with horror the excesses of kings, but knowing their place waited for the judgment of God.
5. He has seen examples of the right time for every purpose and judgment coming.
6. He has also seen that often men come to great misery while waiting for that time.
7. He has also observed as man after man fought the battle to retain his spirit and continue his life under the sun and lost.

He also applied his heart to it. This term has a general meaning of “to deliver, give, place, set up, lay, make, do.” He took his heart and gave it or set it to ponder and strive to comprehend every work that is done under the sun. It is important to note that he uses “all” and “every” which are both from the same term describing “the whole” “the entirety” “everything in a given unit.”

Thus by inspiration Solomon here revealed that he has seen the “entirety” of what he revealed above. He had applied his heart to “everything in” the “given unit.” of the works done under the sun. There is nothing more to be learned. Unlike the previous section where he could not find the one thing necessary, here he found it all! His conclusion on the matter is very simple and clear and unassailable.

There is a time in which one man rules over another to his own hurt.

Using the same term as found in Chapter Three:

To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: [Ecc 3:1](#)

The term refers either to “a period of time” or to “opportunity” for something to occur. There is a period of time and a time when the opportunity to occurs:

to be born,	to die;
to plant,	to pluck what is planted
to kill,	to heal;
to break down,	to build up;
to weep,	to laugh;
to mourn,	to dance;
to cast away stones	to gather stones;

to embrace,	to refrain from embracing
to gain,	to lose;
to keep,	to throw away;
to tear,	to sew;
to keep silence,	to speak;
to love,	to hate;
of war,	of peace.

Just as there is a “*period of time*” and an “*opportunity*” to be born and to die, to have war and to have peace there is also a “*period of time*” and an “*opportunity*” when one man can rule over another. It is a bitter thing to admit and come to understand, but because of the present set of circumstances set in motion because of man’s sin and God’s purpose to redeem as many as possible, “*life under the sun*” allows for the “*opportunity*” for one man to “*have mastery*” “*dominate*” or “*exercise power over*” another.

šālat ... The essential idea of this root is "to exercise autocratic control over, " "to have one's way with" anyone. It appears with its derivatives fifteen times in the Hebrew and thirty-two times in the Aramaic, where the meaning is similar to the Hebrew. Akkadian and Arabic use the root in similar fashion. (The Arabic word "Sultan" is formed from the same root.) ... The basic meaning of the root is well illustrated in Neh 5:15, in which the officials serving under the government of Judah before Nehemiah acted in a tyrannical, self-serving, domineering way with the people in imposing heavy burdens of taxation on them. The people were powerless to resist. In Ps 119:133, the psalmist prays that iniquity shall not have dominion over him. He wants to be firmly established in the Word of God so that he can be free from the terrible tyranny of sin. In a slightly modified sense the verb appears in Eccl 2:19, with the meaning "to exercise control over" the fruit of one's labor." (TDWOT.. 7980)

šālat ... to domineer, to exercise power over, to dominate, to have mastery, to be master, to lord it over
a) (Qal) to domineer, to lord it over, to become master b) (Hiphil) 1) to give power of 2) to get mastery of (BDB #7980)

There are times when a tyrant will rule over another and mistreat and harm him. The phrase “to his own hurt” can be either objective or subjective. It could refer to the hurt that the tyrant inflicts upon a slave, or it can be the hurt that the tyrant receives to himself by being a tyrant. Grammatically either is permissible. The Scriptures also indicate that both are possible. Pharaoh did both. He made the lives of Israel miserable, but his tyrannical reign led to his own destruction along with that of his nation.

And Pharaoh’s servants said to him, “How long will this man be a snare to us? Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God. Do you not realize that Egypt is destroyed?” Ex 10:7

The NIV translates it subjectively(his own hurt) while the NAS translates it objectively(the hurt of others).

All this I saw, as I applied my mind to everything done under the sun. There is a time when a man lords it over others to his own hurt. Eccl 8:9 (NIV)

All this I have seen and applied my mind to every deed that has been done under the sun wherein a man has exercised authority over {another} man to his hurt. Eccl 8:9 (NAS)

Since both are obvious and Scriptural, it seems to make little difference to the context which we choose.

Grace over Justice

In the rest of this chapter and continuing into the next, God will reveal some of the most difficult dilemmas that were created when after Adam sinned and brought the race into ruin, God decided to use forbearance and grace instead of justice. It just isn’t possible for both strict justice and forbearance to operate at the same time. Either wicked people are allowed to do wickedness with the hope of repentance and forgiveness in the future, or they are punished for their crimes immediately. Since no one wants the latter, they have to deal with the consequences of the former. We must understand this! If we want God to be merciful and forbearing to our sins, then since God is no respecter of persons, He will also be merciful to the wicked man who is harming us. Saul of Tarsus was in as much need of grace and forbearance as Peter after his denial of Jesus. Although many Christians may not have understood why God did not deal with the threat he posed, the passage of time made it obvious as Saul became Paul the apostle to the Gentiles. It was exactly the same forbearance, but the sins were different.

Job also wrestled with this through the book that bears his name, and at the end, God rebuked him for his lack of understanding.

"I am blameless, yet I do not know myself; I despise my life. 22 **It is all one thing; Therefore I say, He destroys the blameless and the wicked.** 23 If the scourge slays suddenly, He laughs at the plight of the innocent. 24 The earth is given into the hand of the wicked. He covers the faces of its judges. If it is not He, who else could it be? Job 9:21-24

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said: 2 "Who is this who darkens counsel By words without knowledge? Job 38:1-2

Again, though Job was righteous and blameless, like Abraham it was not from works.

For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. 3 For what does the Scripture say? "**Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.**" 4 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. 5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, 6 just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: 7 "**Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, And whose sins are covered; 8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin.**" Rom 4:2-8

Job could not expect God to forbear and forgive him of his sins and not extend the same courtesy to the rest of men.

The 73rd Psalm is another passage where this truth is grappled with.

Truly God is good to Israel, To such as are pure in heart. 2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped. 3 For I was envious of the boastful, When I saw the prosperity of the wicked. Ps 73:1-3

Why the envy? What was it about the wicked that led this man to nearly slip. He began well, and rightly, God is good to those who are pure in heart, but what happened?

Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase in riches. 13 Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence. 14 For all day long I have been plagued, And chastened every morning. Ps 73:12-14

This man made a terrible blunder. Looking at the wicked, living under the forbearance of God's grace, yet doomed to eternal misery and punishment, appeared to be blessed in every way. While at the same moment this righteous man, who has worked to serve God is living in such a way that the dross is being removed, but is thinking that it is a waste of his time. He is looking only at "life under the sun." But as he meditates, he comes to the same conclusion Solomon will expound upon here.

If I had said, "I will speak thus," Behold, I would have been untrue to the generation of Your children. 16 When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me — 17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end. Ps 73:15-17

The wicked, living under the forbearance of God are heaping up to themselves wrath, while the righteous are working toward eternal life. Hence God is working them with them, chastening and directing their grown while He can do nothing with the wicked.

And **do you think this**, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that **you will escape the judgment of God?** 4 Or do you **despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?** 5 But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart **you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,** 6 who "will render to each one according to his deeds": 7 eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; 8 but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness — indignation and wrath, 9 tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; 10 but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 11 For **there is no partiality with God.** Rom 2:3-11

"My son, **do not despise the chastening of the Lord,** Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; 6 For **whom the Lord loves He chastens,** And scourges every son whom He receives." 7 If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not

chasten? 8 But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. 9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? 10 For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. 11 Now **no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.** Heb 12:5-11

So the tares and the wheat grow together until the judgment. But the moral dilemmas and consequences of them growing together are thorny and complicated. Some like Job become bitter at the chastening while others like the Psalmist become jealous when comparing their own chastening to become more holy with the ease of the life of the ungodly. If we are not to become like Job, uttering words without knowledge, we need to give careful heed to the things the Spirit reveals here.

10. Then I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of holiness,

He begins with the wicked, who appear outwardly to have lived life to the full, in complete rebellion against God with no consequences or punishment before their death.

Yet, no matter who strong, mighty or powerful, death will suddenly enter the life of the wicked and bring it to a close. Koheleth observed (He again took time to “*examine*,” and “*discover*,” so he could “*gain understanding*”). He observed that wicked people (those who are “*in the wrong*,” because they “*have done wrong, are still living in sin, and are intent on continuing with wrong doing*.”). One who “*does not seek God*” “*challenges God*” “*loves violence*,” and “*oppresses the righteous*” is placed by Jehovah into this category. When such a person is buried, what does one say. All their hopes and dreams were for “*life under the sun*,” and that life is now gone forever. They have made no preparation for the day of their burial. They have come (had opportunity) and gone (now buried and forever lost the opportunity) from the place of holiness.

This may describe the nature of their wickedness. They have come and gone from the holy place. It may be affirming that their wickedness is the fact that like most of those in Israel, at one time they had been righteous and then left it. Other passages certainly reflect this truth. In the blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 27-28, God made it very clear that those who have been given great blessings are going to be held to a higher accountability. This was summed up by Peter:

For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. 21 For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. 22 But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: “A dog returns to his own vomit,” and, “a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.” 2 Pet 2:20-22

Another possibility is that this clause does not describe their wickedness, but instead simply states the fact. They died in wickedness and were forever removed from the holy place. They will never have the opportunity for repentance again.

As noted above, the overall context of this passage (8:9-13) is that the outward distinctions between the righteous and the wicked are often blurred “*under the sun*.” The moral government of God is often not clearly discernable when only looking at the events of this life. Sometimes wicked people enjoy “*life under the sun*” to the full without problem or difficulty right up to the end (Ps 73:1-28). Sometimes the righteous die young with little or no enjoyment of the things of life, or even suffer more than the wicked (Heb 11:35-40; 12:1-13).

This leads him to the perplexing questions and conclusions which he now asks in succession. There is a great inequity in the death of truly wicked men. They die, and leave this world. The evil they have done is forgotten, and it appears that there is no real retribution whatsoever. This is a vanity and it leads to the next statement that if justice is not speedily executed, the hearts of men become even more fixed to do evil. Yet though this is seen on the surface, the final conclusion in 12-13 is that it is not true!

Though wickedness be multiplied a hundredfold and their blessing of wealth comfort and ease be incomparable, it will never be that it will be well with the wicked. Though the righteous be persecuted, chastened and without material blessings, the end of the righteous will always be well. This is a fundamental truth which must be fixed into the hearts of all the godly. There will certainly be times when it does not appear to be true, but never let it go, because at before the end of time, it will be proven to be abundantly true.

The wicked are often seen only being buried with no punishment for their crimes. A man is killed in the commission of a crime or before he can be brought to justice. Tyrants die before their crimes catch up with them. So many wicked people committing so many varieties of wickedness upon their fellow man. Yet so often all one sees is their burial. Then, in spite of all their crime and evil, they are forgotten. But how else can it be under a time of forbearance? God is no respecter of persons. If he is to forgive me and give me time to repent, then he must do the same with them.

and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done. This also is vanity.

The unfairness of this is driven home again and again even in our own day. A man commits a terrible crime against humanity. He is not caught or punished, he dies and is forgotten. It seems that he got away with it. It is not fair that some men can live in wickedness and do evil things, and then simply be forgotten. They die without punishment, and then their evil is forgotten as though it never happened. Where is the justice in that? Where is the retribution?

It is obvious that "*life under the sun*" brought no retribution and never can! They are gone! This is a vanity! A fact that once again reveals the futility, the emptiness, the meaninglessness of "*life under the sun.*" For the wicked to "get away" with their crimes through death and then not even have the penalty of being remembered for their infamy is a great vanity.

It is a difficult and sore trial to the righteous. All should be punished for their crimes! They should be made to pay for their evil. Yet they don't. They die just like the righteous and are forgotten just as the righteous and are buried right next to the righteous. There doesn't seem to be any retribution. It is vanity.

11. Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily,

This passage is true in every realm of life. From the small company which tolerates evildoing without retribution, to the city, the state, the country, the church, or the home, any time evil works go unpunished, or are not speedily punished, a very unfortunate set of circumstances arises. The term "sentence" is defined.

"pithgam... a (judicial) sentence;- a decree, sentence." (Strong p 97 #6599)

This is the first step. They have committed an evil work by being "*morally evil or hurtful,*" either with "*evil words,*" "*evil thoughts,*" or "*evil actions.*" The person has been assessed and declared guilty, and the punishment has been determined. The sentence was then passed and the penalty decreed. But it was not "executed" quickly. Executed is the common word for what one "*does, fashions, makes produces or accomplishes.*"

Thus the sentence was not produced, created or brought into being. It had been decreed, but not executed speedily. It must be done "*promptly,*" "*hastily,*" "*quickly,*" and "*swiftly.*"

"meherah... properly a hurry; hence (adverbally) promptly: hastily, quickly, shortly, soon, make with speed, swiftly." (Strong p 62 #4120)

Once the sentence has been passed, it must be carried out in a hurry. There is a great need for this if it is to have the necessary impact. Hence when civil government determines that a citizen has committed a crime and needs to be punished and the punishment is set, it is imperative that the sentence be carried out in a hurry. When parents determine a child is guilty, and have passed sentence, the punishment needs to be meted out promptly. If it is not done quickly then a terrible consequence will follow.

therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.

The term therefore is made up of two terms. They are combined many times in the Old Testament to emphasize a result or consequence.

`al- as a preposition: 1) upon, on the ground of, according to, on account of, on behalf of, concerning, beside, in addition to, together with, beyond, above, over, by, on to, toward, to, against as a conjunction: 2) because that, because, notwithstanding, although... #5921

ken- as an adverb: 1) so, therefore, thus a) thus, so b) just so c) therefore ... g) (with prep) 1) therefore, this being so (specific)... 3) therefore, on this ground (general) #3651

This consequence is going to follow every time the above set of circumstance occurs. It is going to cause the hearts of the sons of men to become fully set on evil. The term "fully" It means "to be full," "to be filled up" "to the full extent of what is expected," and even "filling to overflowing."

male', "to fill, fulfill, overflow, ordain, endow." This verb occurs in all Semitic languages (including biblical Aramaic) and in all periods. Biblical Hebrew attests it about 250 times. Basically, *male'* means "to be full" ... The verb is sometimes used figuratively as in Gen. 6:13, when God noted that "the earth is filled with violence."... Used transitively, this verb means the act or state of "filling something." ... *Male'* is used of "filling to overflowing"-- not just filling up to the limits of something, but filling so as to go beyond its limits: "For Jordan overfloweth all his banks..." Josh. 3:15. (Vine's #4390)

If any authority does not quickly punish those who were caught in evil, convicted and sentenced then this will be the result. Their hearts will fill to overflowing with wickedness. There will be no respect for authority, no fear of being caught, and no attempt to stop doing that which is evil.

This basic meaning must now be woven back into the context of the section. Because God does not speedily execute His wrath on sinful men who are doing wickedness, many of them have allowed their hearts to be fully set in them to do evil. This presents an interesting paradox between the value of God's forbearance and the damage it creates when the judgment is put off in hope of repentance. Since the only way for man to be saved is to put off judgment until the end of "life under the sun," the sentence can never be speedily passed.

*But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. 8 But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that **with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.** 9 The **Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.** 10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. 2Pet 3:7-10*

For some this leads to repentance, and for others it leads to a hardened heart that is fully set to do evil. What choice would we have God make? If He executes His wrath and His justice immediately after sin, then none(including ourselves and those we love) will have time to repent, and His eternal irrevocable judgment begin. If God does not immediately punish their evil doing, then some will turn God's grace into a further hardening.

Solomon presents this fact in a way that startles the mind and causes it to move rapidly. He does not offer an answer, only observes its truth. That it is true cannot be denied. God's vengeance on evil doers is often so far off that it is put out of the mind. Some of the righteous over the years have had severe difficulty with the truth of this. Paul warns to simply wait for it.

Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Rom 12:19

Yet that day is coming. The day in which God will settle all accounts and make the wicked pay for their wickedness. This had been clearly revealed only seven generations after Adam.

Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, 15 to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the

harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." Jude 14-15

Though "life under the sun" does not always reflect God's true justice the fact remains that vengeance, judgment and justice are coming. The higher motives of mercy, compassion, forbearance and forgiveness, keep that justice from coming swiftly and sadly the wicked use them to fully set their hearts to do evil.

Sentence will not be executed speedily, because God in love and mercy offers them time to repent., Their hardened hearts and fully set to do evil, does not nullify the goodness of God's decision.

What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, 23 in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory— 24 even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? Rom 9:22-24

12. Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged,

Even under the most terrible examples of the truth that because God did not execute the sentence of punishment quickly the wicked have their hearts fully set to do evil, Solomon knows it is all an illusion. Even if a sinner gets away with his sins a hundred times over with his life prolonged in comfort, the man of faith still knows it is not the how events will ultimately turn out. Since we walk by faith and not by sight (II Cor. 5:7), in the end, it will not turn out well. Just remember rich man after his death who was in torment in flame(Luke 16:23).

When I thought how to understand this, It was too painful for me — 17 Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end. 18 Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. 19 Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. 20 As a dream when one awakes, So, Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image. Ps. 73:16-20

yet I surely know

Under inspiration, he revealed his own confidence that God's decree though put off and ignored will ultimately be delivered. The term "surely" is a word of "emphasis," "stress" or "climax," and can also be translated with "indeed!"

gam- 1) also, even, indeed, moreover, yea a) also, moreover (giving emphasis) ... c) even (for stress) ... d) indeed, yea (introducing climax) BDB #1571

In spite of outward appearances to the contrary, Koheleth has that hidden bit of knowledge that contradicts it all! He knows the truth! This term is reveals a deeper understanding and knowledge than "seen" and "saw" of verses ten and eleven. This is a knowledge coming from "experience with the senses," "by investigating and proving," or by "reflection and consideration." More importantly, this "'knower' has actual involvement with or in the object of the knowing."

Koheleth knew this because God revealed it. He will speak more fully on this in his closing words.

9 Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, And let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; Walk in the ways of your heart, And in the sight of your eyes; But know that for all these God will bring you into judgment. Eccl 11:9

For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.

that it will be well with those who fear God,

In spite of outward appearances, God has revealed that the righteous will have it well. They will be rewarded for their service. The term "well" is the same one used in the first chapter of Genesis describe how God saw what He had created was "good." It is used of things that are "good" "pleasant" and "agreeable," things that make one "glad," "happy," and "prosperous." No matter what life "under the sun" brings, it has no bearing on this truth. Events "under the sun" may and clearly will contradict it. Do not believe it. It will be well only with those who fear God.

So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the

Lord. 7 For we walk by faith, not by sight. 8 We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. 2Cor 5:6-8

Sometimes, only after we are absent from our body, and at home with the Lord will this promise be complete.

who fear before Him.

The repetition of fear is obviously for emphasis. Like many words with more than one meaning, this one requires some thought.

yare' "to be afraid, stand in awe, fear." This verb occurs in Ugaritic and Hebrew (both biblical and post-biblical). The Bible attests it approximately 330 times and in all periods. Basically, this verb connotes the psychological reaction of "fear." *yare'* may indicate being afraid of something or someone. Jacob prayed: "Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children" Gen 32:11. Used of a person in an exalted position, *yare'* connotes "standing in awe." This is not simple fear, but reverence, whereby an individual recognizes the power and position of the individual revered and renders him proper respect. In this sense, the word may imply submission to a proper ethical relationship to God; the angel of the Lord told Abraham: "...I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me" Gen 22:12. (Vine's OT:4172)

Clearly the word describes terror and fear of loss of life on the one end and respect and reverence on the other. It is difficult not to blend these two ideas in our relationship with God. When walking with God in fellowship, it is respect and reverence. When we sin and have yet to repent, it should create terror and fear of the loss of our soul. So those who fear are contrasted with those who do not fear.

*yet I surely know that it will be well with those who **fear** God, who **fear** before Him. 13 But it will not be well with the wicked; nor will he prolong his days, which are as a shadow, because he does not **fear** before God. Eccl 8:12-13*

It will be well with those who fear and respect and it will not be well with those who are wicked because they do not fear before him. The term "before" Him is not a simple preposition as it is in English.

pānîm Face. This particular word always occurs in the plural, perhaps indicative of the fact that the face is a combination of a number of features. As we shall see below, the face identifies the person and reflects the attitude and sentiments of the person. As such, *pānîm* can be a substitute for the self or the feelings of the self. ... *lipnê*.... A preposition, in the presence of, before. This is the most frequent usage of *penê* (plural construct) with a prefixed preposition. Literally, the phrase means "at/to the face of." (TDWNT 6440; 6442)

It is a derivative of the term face and always has the connotation of before the face or in the presence of. Everyone lives in the presence of God, but most do not acknowledge it.

so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; 28 for in Him we live and move and have our being, Acts 17:27-28

Where shall I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? 8 If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! 9 If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, 10 even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. Ps 139:7-10

Yet though we are always before Him, some like Adam and Eve want to hide from His presence (Gen 3:8), while others like Cain and Jonah wanted to go out of or flee from the presence of the LORD (Gen 4:16; Jon. 1:3). It will be well with those who recognize His continual presence and fear and respect Him. Those who "fear before Him" are those who recognize that they do in fact live in His presence, and because they know this, they live in awe, reverence, respect. It will be well for those who do.

13. But it will not be well with the wicked;

Just as he knows it will be well with the righteous, he also knows it will not be well with the wicked.

rāšā' "wicked; ungodly; guilty." *rāšā'* occurs only in Hebrew and late Aramaic. The word occurs about 260 times as a noun or an adjective and especially in the poetic literature of the Old Testament. It is rare in the Pentateuch and in the historical books. Its frequency increases in the prophetic books. The narrow meaning of *rāšā'* lies in the concept of "wrongdoing" or "being in the wrong." It is a legal term. The person who has sinned against the law is guilty: "They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them" Prov 28:4. (Vine's #7563)

God's revealed truth is that the wicked will never have the peace of the righteous.

But the wicked are like the troubled sea, When it cannot rest, Whose waters cast up mire and dirt. 21 "There is no peace," Says my God, "for the wicked." Isa 57:20-21

This is God's revealed truth. It will never end well for the wicked. In the mercy and grace of God, while they "live under the sun" you can't tell the difference on the outside:

But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. Mt 5:44-45

But there is a huge difference in the day of their death.

nor will he prolong his days which are as a shadow, because he does not fear before God.

This is the main reason why it will never be well with the wicked. The choice they made is to get it here and now. They have rejected God, rejected all that God has promised and chosen instead to live for "life under the sun." Yet death awaits all men and sooner or later death comes and snatches them away. No one can prolong his days "under the sun."

Until I went into the sanctuary of God; Then I understood their end. 18 Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. 19 Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. 20 As a dream when one awakes, So, Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image. Ps 73:17-20

The key to this whole section is set forth above. The wicked are in slippery places, their life is no more stable and no more tangible than a shadow. The days of the wicked are only a shadow. There is no substance to them. There is no hope to them. There is no guarantee to them. They pass one by one with no security and no real lasting satisfaction. All of this as just punishment for his lack of fear before the Lord.

The reason for of all this is that he does not reverence, respect and honor God. Those who do not love, reverence and respect God cannot expect any help from God in the end.

Man's Loss of Dominion

For the second of the four times Solomon returns to the subject of man's loss of dominion under the sun. In the first chapter Solomon described the changes to the creation after sin brought a curse upon it.

And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. Gen 1:31

I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind. What is crooked cannot be made straight, And what is lacking cannot be numbered. Eccl 1:14-15

From "all He had made was very good," to "all is vanity and grasping for the wind." Of all the things that are now lacking, this one seems to have the most impact on our daily life. Before the curse, God said this:

*"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have **dominion** over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ... 28 "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and **subdue it; have dominion** ..." Gen 1:26, 28*

Man had dominion. Everything he planned came to fruition. All that he did worked exactly as he

envisioned it. There was no death, no sickness, or accidents. There was no fear of animals, or the dangers of physics or chemistry. After sin, all that changed into the world we now live. A life where some things are lacking and others are twisted into things they were never meant to be.

Now, what man plans is subject to “time and chance” and things often work out entirely differently than first thought. Man has no dominion over anything.

So Solomon sought for something that might change the outcome and could not find it. Not even serving God and being just makes any difference. There is no dominion “under the sun.”

14. There is a vanity which occurs on earth,

Koheleth returns again the one of the central points of why he concluded in the first verse that “*all is vanity.*” This problem has been described four different times now under different the events that reveal it.

1. *I have seen everything in my days of vanity: There is **a just man who perishes in his righteousness**, And there is **a wicked man who prolongs life in his wickedness.** Eccl 7:15*
2. *There is a vanity which occurs on earth, that there are **just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked**; again, there are **wicked men to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous.** I said that this also is vanity. Eccl 8:14*
3. ***All things come alike to all: One event happens to the righteous and the wicked; To the good, the clean, and the unclean; To him who sacrifices and him who does not sacrifice. As is the good, so is the sinner; He who takes an oath as he who fears an oath. 3 This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing happens to all. Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead.** Eccl 9:2-3*
4. *I returned and saw under the sun that — The **race is not to the swift**, Nor the **battle to the strong**, Nor **bread to the wise**, Nor **riches to men of understanding**, Nor **favor to men of skill**; But **time and chance happen to them all.** 12 For man also does not know his time: Like fish taken in a cruel net, Like birds caught in a snare, So the sons of men are snared in an evil time, When it falls suddenly upon them. Eccl 9:11-12*

The problem simply stated is that although he had just said: “*I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. But it will not be well with the wicked,*” (Eccl 8:12-13), he can’t prove it “*under the sun.*” It can be proved by Scripture and revelation. It can be proved by the solemn affirmations of God that it is true and that this truth will be revealed after this life is over. But it can’t be demonstrated “*under the sun.*” So even though he knows the above is true by inspiration, there is little corroborating evidence “*under the sun.*”

This has created two serious problems, one for the wicked and the other for the righteous. It leads to wicked to madness, rebellion and hardening.

This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing happens to all. Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. Eccl 9:3-4

And they say, "How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?" 12 Behold, these are the ungodly, Who are always at ease; They increase in riches. Ps 73:11-12

These things you have done, and I kept silent; You thought that I was altogether like you; But I will rebuke you, And set them in order before your eyes. Ps 50:21

The other problem comes to the righteous who can become envious or just lose focus and begin to live as though there is no difference.

Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain, And washed my hands in innocence. 14 For all day long I have been plagued, And chastened every morning. Ps 73:13-14

Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. Mt 13:22-23

Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity. Lk 8:14-15

Although these are all false, they cannot be refuted “*under the sun*,” only faith in what God has revealed can reveal these things.

that there are just men to whom it happens according to the work of the wicked;

The just man is one who does what is “*lawful*” and “*right*” in the eyes of God. It is also the man who has been “*justified and vindicated by God*.”

tsaddiyq- just, lawful, righteous ... b) just, right (in one’s cause) c) just, righteous (in conduct and character) d) righteous (as justified and vindicated by God) e) right, correct, lawful (BDB #6662)

These are the people who fill the pages of the Scriptures. People like Abel, who was murdered by his brother, Job, who lost all his possessions and health, Jesus who was crucified and Paul who was beaten and mistreated. All of these men received according to the work of the wicked. If one did not know the Scriptures they might conclude that it was actually better to be a wicked person.

All this because of the curse and the free will of man. God’s gift of grace and mercy in allowing each of us to live and make choices has led to such events. When a just and righteous man receives what the wicked ought to receive it creates terrible consequences. Things that simply can’t be explained. When we speak of it in the Scriptures, it is a paradox and nothing more, but when it happens to us, our family or someone we love, it becomes an unbearable burden. It is a terrible thing when a just man or woman dies young, has terrible tragedy and sorrow enter their lives.

But when it happens, though inexplicable, we must live by faith in God’s word and not by seeking to know how God feels by events “*under the sun*.”

again, there are wicked men to whom it happens according to the work of the righteous.

The other side of the dilemma is also set forth. “*under the sun*” wicked men can live a long prosperous comfortable life. Although Job’s three friends tried to convince Job that this wasn’t true, they were wrong. Wicked men can in fact live a life of comfort and ease that might cause us to believe that they were especially favored by God. Jesus also exploded this error.

that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. Matt 5:45

These two facts, set side by side create an unbearable paradox for the righteous for which there is no answer or solution. There is no logic, no simple answer, no formula or solution. The more one considers it, the more unbearable it becomes. Even the answer the Psalmist comes up with is not comforting when a godly young woman loses her husband and must take care of the children alone.

Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. 19 Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. 20 As a dream when one awakes, So, Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image. Ps 73:18-20

Looked at from every angle, both at the beginning of the verse and now at the end, the only conclusion Solomon can give us is that for those under the sun, it is vanity.

I said that this also is vanity.

Hence this is one of the considerations that went into Solomon’s conclusion at the beginning of the book that all that is under the sun is vanity. It is fruitless and empty, like a bubble after it pops. It is a vanity for the two reasons set forth above. It creates a false picture that Satan wished to weave as he did with Eve. For the righteous it creates the illusion that serving God brings no benefit and for the wicked, the illusion that they will never be brought to justice. It creates dilemmas that cannot be answered. Most important of all, it leaves a sense of doom and foreboding in the hearts of the

righteous. No matter how faithful they are to God, tomorrow may bring suffering and sorrow to the righteous. What we have today can be swept away in a moment of time.

The truly righteous know this in their heart and live within the confines of a spiritual focus that does not take into account the events of this world. But this is not the realm Solomon is describing. How should this impact our life under the sun? What conclusion does he draw regarding this terrible vanity?

15. So I commended enjoyment,

With the great perplexities and paradoxes of “life under the sun,” Solomon again returns to what one can do to insulate themselves from these ups and downs over which they have no control? Instead of becoming despondent, or giving up entirely on this life and simply waiting for the next, God wants His people to understand that He still wants us to enjoy what can be enjoyed. Even with the vanity, brevity and uncertainty of life, our inspired writer holds up enjoyment to both “*laud*,” and “*praise*” it.

shabach- 1) to soothe, to still, to stroke a) (Piel) to soothe, to still b) (Hiphil) stilling (participle) 2) to laud, to praise, to commend a) (Piel) 1) to laud, to praise (God) 2) to commend, to congratulate (the dead) b) (Hithpael) to boast (BDB #7623)

Why does God want him to extol, praise and recommend enjoyment? As has been noted several times already in the book, because of the sin’s curse, all that is “*under the sun*” is only temporary. No matter what is built, it will be torn down and not remembered. The righteous may or may not enjoy all that this life has to give in the way of material wealth, prosperity, popularity or power. But no matter how high or low, all who fear God can learn to enjoy whatever they do have. This has been a common refrain throughout the book.

*Nothing is better for a man than that he should eat and drink, and that **his soul should enjoy good in his labor**. This also, I saw, was from the hand of God. 25 For who can eat, or **who can have enjoyment, more than I?** Eccl 2:24-25*

*I know that nothing is better for them than **to rejoice**, and to do good in their lives, 13 and also that every man should eat and drink and **enjoy the good** of all his labor — it is the gift of God. Eccl 3:12-13*

*So I perceived that nothing is better than that **a man should rejoice in his own works, for that is his heritage**. For who can bring him to see what will happen after him? Eccl 3:22*

*Here is what I have seen: It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and **to enjoy the good of all his labor** in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; **for it is his heritage**. 19 As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to **receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor** — **this is the gift of God**. Eccl 5:18-20*

Is it starting to sink in? God wants the righteous to enjoy what there is to enjoy in their life whether that be little or much. There is so much beauty and loveliness to “life under the sun.” that was untouched by the curse. How can we be thankful if we refuse to take pleasure and enjoyment in the good things God has done for us?

giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Eph. 5:20-21 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1Th. 5:18

Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. Heb. 13:15-16

Certainly we can fulfill these things with all our spiritual blessings, but why overlook all the wonderful things God gave us here? Even in the worst of circumstances, there are still things to enjoy and praise Him for.

At any given moment the righteous must choose what they will focus upon. We can become bitter, angry, resentful, jealous and sullen. We can allow the inequities of life to beat us down and leave us a shell. But there is another choice that God offers. Paul spoke of it many years later.

Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: 12 I know

how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Phil 4:11-13

Enjoyment is an inner state of mind based upon whatever circumstances we choose to create it with. It is the “joy,” “gladness,” “gaiety” and “pleasure” we extract from life. For some it takes a great deal while for others, it takes just a beautiful day and a good meal. God wants us to learn as Paul did to enjoy our lot in life whatever it might be.

simchah- joy, mirth, gladness a) mirth, gladness, joy, gaiety, pleasure b) the joy (of God) c) a glad result, a happy issue(BDB #8057).

Since the righteous “know” that it will “surely” be “well” with those who fear God(8:12), and that because of the present set of circumstances while living under the curse of sin “under the sun.” they may suffer through no fault of their own, they need to learn to be content and to praise and laud the enjoyment they can get from the simple things of life. Once again(for the fourth of five times) Koheleth offers two of the most simple places where it can be found.

because a man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and be merry;

The reason God wants man to view “life under the sun” in this manner is because man has nothing better. The term “nothing” is a word for “nonexistence,” “negation,” for it “negates the existence of the one or thing.”

‘*ayin*, “no; not; nothing; or else, nor.” Cognates of this word appear in Akkadian, Ugaritic, and Phoenician (Punic). The word appears 789 times in biblical Hebrew and in all periods.’*Ayin* may be used absolutely, with no suffixes and not in a construct chain. When so used the word signifies nonexistence. In other contexts the word means “nothing ... In the construct state ‘*ayin* has the same basic meaning. Elsewhere the word expresses simple negation... With a suffixed pronoun ‘*ayin* negates the existence of the one or thing so represented; with the suffixed pronoun “he,” the word means “he was no longer”: (Vine’s # 369)

This is something to accept by faith and act upon. There simply is nothing better “under the sun” than to eat, drink, and be merry. He tried wealth, power, learning, accumulation of things, and now after assessing the frustrations of life, the conclusion still comes back the same. There is nothing more to be gained from “*life under the sun*” than to enjoy your food, your beverages, and the things you can extract merriment from. The term “merry” refers to “*a spontaneous, unsustained feeling of jubilation,*” “*a feeling so strong that it finds expression in some external act, and “a feeling prompted by some external and unsustained stimulus.*” It is also “*a smiling, cheerful, merry countenance, free from care.*”

samach, “to rejoice, be joyful.” This verb ... appears in all periods of Hebrew and about 155 times in the Bible.... usually refers to a spontaneous emotion or extreme happiness which is expressed in some visible and or external manner. It does not normally represent an abiding state of well being or feeling. This emotion arises at festivals, circumcision feasts, wedding feasts, harvest feasts, the overthrow of one’s enemies, and other such events.... suggests three elements:(1) a spontaneous, unsustained feeling of jubilation, (2) a feeling so strong that it finds expression in some external act, and (3) a feeling prompted by some external and unsustained stimulus. (Vine’s # 8055)

“...to rejoice, to be joyful, to be glad: the primary idea seems to be that of a smiling, cheerful, merry countenance, free from care; sometimes of a louder joy, to be or make merry...” (Wilson p 346)

There are so many things that can do this for us and we need to extract as much of it as we possibly can. A beautiful sunrise, a smile on the face of one we love, a victory, the wisdom we gain from a defeat, a success, or the wisdom we gain from failure. On and on it goes. We can all learn to be content and merry in whatever circumstances we find ourselves if we trust the Lord and keep our expectations low. In this way our praise to God will always be warm, spontaneous, sincere and genuine.

for this will remain with him in his labor for the days of his life which God gives him under the sun.

This God's guarantee to those who fear him! This will remain with him all the days of his life. At the least he will always be able to get this enjoyment from his food, beverages and labor and no one can take these things from him all the days of his "life under the sun." The term "remain" means that God will "twine" it to us, it will "unite" with us, "adhere" us "to" it and allow it to "accompany" us.

*lavah... a primitive root; properly, to twine, i.e. (by implication) to unite, to remain..." (Strongs)
lavah... 1) to join, to be joined ... b) (Niphal) to join oneself to, to be joined unto (BDB # 3867)
lavah... to be joined, to adhere to, to accompany. (Wilson p 2)*

This is a very precious promise and one that ought to be near and dear to the hearts of all who fear God. It comes from other passages as well:

Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." 6 So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?" Heb 13:5-6

God promised this. He promised he He would not leave or forsake us. He promised that if we trust him, our enjoyment of life will never end.

You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You. 4 Trust in the Lord forever, For in Yah, the Lord, is everlasting strength. Isa 26:3-4

One will not receive the rewards of righteousness here, nor can they expect that life will reward them with all its fruits. This is too much to expect. But what those who fear God can expect is here offered. Let them find all their joy in these realms and they will never be disappointed!

In his concluding remarks, he warns us that though this is a general guideline, and will help to enjoy what can be enjoyed, it is not the solution to life. As a matter of fact, there is no formula! There is no key to success! We simply live one day at a time enjoying what can be enjoyed and striving to understand what cannot be fully comprehended. Those who think they have it all figured out will be proven false!

16. When I applied my heart to know wisdom and to see the business that is done on earth,

After Koheleth had applied the wisdom God gave him, along with the inspiration of Holy Spirit to these deep dilemma's that had helped smooth some of the more thorny issues of life, he had not done much more than scratch the surface.

Even with all the information, experience and inspiration Koheleth could not do it. He gave his heart completely to the task, he sought to know ("experience with the senses," "by investigating and proving," or by "reflection and consideration)." He also sought to see ("observe," "examine," "discover," or "gain understanding," so he could "perceive," "realize," or "get acquainted with)." He worked very very hard to gain an understanding of the business done on earth. The Hebrew term "business" is used exclusively in the book of Ecclesiastes. It is defined as "occupation," "task," "employment" "job."

`inyan- an occupation, a task, a job # 6045

`inyan ado, i.e. (generally) employment or (specifically) an affair: # 6045

It was used to describe either the outcome or meaning of all the effort, toil, and labor that is done under the sun. Two passages help us see exactly what he is sought but failed to comprehend.

*And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this **burdensome task** God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised. 14 I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind. 15 What is crooked cannot be made straight, And what is lacking cannot be numbered. Ecc 1:13-15*

*I have seen **the task** which God has given the sons of men with which to occupy themselves. 3:10*

He sought to see the business that is done on the earth. He wanted to delve even more deeply into all this. Two passages seem to indicate what he was trying to unravel, but he just couldn't do it.

For who knows what is good for man in life, all the days of his vain life which he passes like a shadow?

Who can tell a man what will happen after him under the sun? Eccl 6:12

For he does not know what will happen; So who can tell him when it will occur? Eccl 8:7

There is no answer, no explanation. There is one for our relationship with God. But the formula for what goes on “under the sun” could not be fathomed.

even though one sees no sleep day or night,

Even if he had devoted twenty-four hours a day to it, it would not have mattered. It is beyond man’s ability to be able to do it.

17. Then I saw all the work of God,

As Solomon approached the very citadel of God’s works in this world he ran into a severe difficulty in comprehension. The deeper he proceeded, the more complicated things got. As he saw all the works of God and the interrelationships that they have with one another, he began to go slower and slower, until he was finally exhausted and could simply go no further. God has so set up “life under the sun” after the curse in such a way that it cannot be fathomed or mastered.

Everything God has made looks simple on the surface, but the deeper one goes, the more complicated it becomes. God’s work “under the sun” simply cannot be comprehended.

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! 34 "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?" 35 "Or who has first given to Him And it shall be repaid to him?" 36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. Rom. 11:33-36

that a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun.

A simple statement of fact. Man cannot find out the work done under the sun. The term work is the same one used above. It is a much broader one than the term task in the previous verse. It is the “*general word for work,*” in the sense of what one produces or makes. It can be deeds, labor, business, undertakings, enterprises, or achievements. It simply refers to the end result of labor.

ma`aseh- a deed, a work a) a deed, a thing done, an act b) work, labor c) business, pursuit d) undertaking, enterprise e) an achievement f) deeds, works (of deliverance and judgment) g) work, a thing made h) work (of God) l) a product # 4639

The product of God’s labor and toil and the product of man’s labor and toil are both incomprehensible. It cannot be found out. No matter how wise one might be and how much effort they expend they will not be able to find it out.

For though a man labors to discover it, yet he will not find it;

A man might set the goal and then “labor” to discover it.

amal to labor, with the idea of effort and exhaustion; to toil...trouble, vexation, sorrow...(Wilson p. 241 #5998)

He might work and toil to the point of exhaustion to “discover” it. This term also has the idea of strong effort and toil. When one is striving to “seek” and “search,” for “*something that is lost or missing,*” and “*whose location is unknown,*” they will obviously be working hard.

baqash, "to seek, search, consult." This verb occurs only in Ugaritic, Phoenician, and Hebrew. It appears in the Bible about 220 times and in all periods. Basically *baqash* means "to seek" to find something that is lost or missing, or, at least, whose location is unknown... The sense "seek to secure" emphasizes the pursuit of a wish or the accomplishing of a plan. ... This image may have an emotional coloring, such as, "to aim at, devote oneself to, and be concerned about."... (Vines #1245)

Yet even with all this, he will not find it. The search is fruitless. No one can find “*where it is*” no matter how “*purposeful*” the search.

matsa', "to find, meet, get." ... *Matsa'* refers to "finding" someone or something that is lost or misplaced, or "finding" where it is. The thing may be found as the result of a purposeful search... may connote not only "finding" a subject in a location, but "finding something" in an abstract sense... can also mean "to

discover."... (Vine's #4672)

How clear can God be. If we are going to wait until we understand things better before giving ourselves completely to God, we are never going to do it. This gives even greater power to the passage that demands that we trust in the LORD with all our heart and lean not on our own understanding. It is an act of love on God's part to demand this because it really is not in man that walks to direct his steps.

moreover, though a wise man attempts to know it, he will not be able to find it.

For those who are still not convinced, and feel that he just gave up too easily, there is this one final clause. "Moreover" stresses that this is to be the final word on this subject.

gam-... a) also, moreover (giving emphasis) ... c) even (for stress) d) indeed, yea (introducing climax).. (BDB #1571)

Even a truly wise man. One who submits to God and uses only God's revealed will for his quest. It won't matter whether one has a true and full wisdom of God and a knowledge of the Scriptures, or they have a crafty and shrewd worldly wisdom in physics, chemistry, etc. .

chakam - wise, a wise (man) a) skillful (in technical work) b) wise (in administration) c) shrewd, crafty, cunning, wily, subtle d) learned, shrewd (class of men) e) prudent f) wise (ethically and religiously #2450)

No one, no matter how wise, skillful, shrewd, cunning, wily, learned or prudent will be able to complete this attempt. The answers are simply not available. This is true for the following reasons. Some things are secret (Deut. 29:29) they cannot be known or fathomed by man because they have not been revealed. Man might seek to understand them, but he never will. Other things are too wonderful (Job 42:3), they are too high and lofty to be understood. This is offered as a warning to the righteous. You just can't find all the answers. Go as far as you can, but realize that sooner or later you are going to have to accept your limitations and rely on your faith to take you the rest of the way.