

**Ecclesiastes 8: 9-13; “It is Well For Those Who Fear God”, Sermon # 57 in the series – “Remember Your Creator”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2019, at the Rendall Home.**

We have already seen that there is a time for everything under heaven. In the holy mind of God there is a time; a certain and specific time, in which one man rules over another to his hurt. This is awful to contemplate because of the pain and suffering and misery which people experience when an unrighteous man rules. And those who are suffering, wonder when they will be released from the grasp of such an unrighteous king or ruler. Those who are suffering because of his rule, and those who sympathize with them; who are looking on, but unable to do anything about it, they sometimes also wonder about God. Why does God wait to judge wicked men? Why does He allow them to continue on, and to even prosper and flourish?

You and I need to know that everything God does, and everything that He permits; He does so for very important reasons which are related to His justice and His mercy. Men who are judges, whether they are kings or Presidents, or Supreme Court justices; they will either rule over people for their good, or to their hurt. But God rules over all men to judge them righteously, and to show mercy to those who will fear Him. That is the truth being conveyed to us here. So tonight we want to look 1<sup>st</sup> – At time, in relation to judging an evil work. (verses 9-11) And then 2<sup>nd</sup> – We want to look at the fact that it will be well for those who fear before God, and how awful it will be for those who do not. (verses 12 and 13)

**1<sup>st</sup> of all – We want to look at time in relation to judging an evil work.** (verses 9-11)

“All this I have seen, applied my heart to every work that is done under the sun: There is a time in which one man rules over another to his own hurt.” “Then I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of holiness, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done.” “This also is vanity.” “Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” Let me begin by saying that God is in control over the time that any man is in power. “There is a time set for the length of any man’s rule”. And, further, in the last part of verse 9 it says, “There is a time in which one man rules over another to his own hurt.” That is, God has expectations of rulers in terms of the time that He gives them to rule.

God gives to every person their life; their time which He holds in His hands, in which they will do what they will do, whether righteousness or wickedness. But this also applies to those who rule. And God is looking to see whether the ruler will speedily execute a sentence against an evil work; whether that ruler will judge righteously or not. A ruler is in power to commend what is good and to punish what is evil. Romans 13: 3 – “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil.” “Do you want to be unafraid of the authority?” “Do what is good and you will have praise from the same.” It is the ruler’s job to judge righteously, in accordance with the principles and truths which are found in God’s revealed and written Word, the Bible. God will impartially judge all earthly judges.

A ruler might, through his trying to justify the judgments of his own thoughts, which are not in accordance with God’s Word, come to oppress and hurt those under his authority by his sinful and wrong judgments, but he will also hurt himself by not judging and punishing sin and evil in the kingdom or country over which he rules. He will, because of his comprising and ignoring God’s standards, get for himself a bad reputation in this life among good men, and have to bear the eternal reproach and punishment of God forever in the next life. Let’s look at this from God’s standpoint. I want you to turn with me to Psalm 82. “God stands in the congregation of the mighty; He judges among the gods.” “How long will you judge unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked?” “Defend the poor and fatherless; do justice to the afflicted and needy.” “Deliver

the poor and needy: free them from the hand of the wicked.” “They do not know, nor do they understand; they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are unstable.”

Now, you can see from this what God is expecting. God considers it to be wrong and sinful when rulers judge unjustly, and show partiality to the wicked. When they show favor to men who are sinful, and agree to do what is wrong, and try to establish it as right, they will go about it in this way. They will declare to their subjects or their fellow-countrymen, that all will supposedly benefit from their wicked schemes. Rulers like this do not “defend the poor and the fatherless.” They do not do the right thing of giving help and doing right by the afflicted and the needy.” They do not deliver the poor and the needy from the hand of the wicked. They believe in unscrupulous business practices, and they are willing to take bribes from, and give favors to wicked men, so that they will be able to flourish in their promotion of various sins which appear good to people to be good at first. But later on they will be found destroying them; both soul and body.

You could list many sins and public vices under this heading. Gambling, abortion, pornography, homosexual rights, and etc. But what is just as bad, and even worse, is that such judges do not promote the truth of God Himself. They do not promote the moral truths of God’s law which are absolute in relation to His governing of the world. They do not promote what is true and right and good and honorable. The people under this ruler’s leadership are in darkness as a result. Verse 5 – “They do not know, nor do they understand; they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are unstable.” What will God do about this? Verse 6 says, “I said, “You are gods, and all of you are children of the Most High.” “But you shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.”

This relates to what it says in verse 10 – “Then I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of holiness, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done.” This was what happened in Jerusalem, the holy city; the place where holiness should have dwelt, because the ruler had the statutes of God to rule by, and he did not rule righteously in accordance with them.” What vanity! What a waste, of all that God had given to them. Do not such rulers deserve to be judged? Verse 8 tells us that the Psalmist cried out for God to act – “Arise, O God, judge the earth; for You shall inherit all nations.” What lessons can we learn from this? The main lesson that we should learn is to heed the warnings of God which are found in the Scriptures. We must call sin evil, and righteousness right. We cannot redefine what God has plainly said is right and wrong and expect that God will bless our nation.

Turn with me to Isaiah Chapter 5, verses 20 and 21. “Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” “Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!” This is especially true of those who are in positions of political power; people who can promote what is true and good, and punish that which God defines as evil. But often, what an ungodly leader will do, is to twist the definition of good and call it evil; and twist the definition of what is evil; calling it good. This shows us the importance of our putting men and women in authority and leadership in this country, who know the truth of the Bible; people who will keep the commandments of God and do what is right. It is very necessary to the stability of our nation, and learning to do things which please God.

It is not enough for a people to please themselves. They must ask themselves whether what they are doing is pleasing to God. And the only way that this can be rightly determined is by their knowing, believing, and being willing to live out the truth of the Bible. Listen to verse 24 of Isaiah 5. These are the consequences which come to a nation which has a leader or leaders who call good evil, and evil good. “Therefore, as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so their root will be as rottenness, and their blossom will ascend like dust; because they have rejected the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel.”

A man who knows the Bible and who wants to keep the commandments of God, will execute the sentence against evil as quickly as he can. If he does not, the hearts of the sons of men will be fully set in them to do evil. We can be thankful, however, that God does not execute the sentence against our evil works speedily or none of us would ever be saved.

These verses that we are studying are not just telling us that this man in power hurts and oppresses the people under his rule; but that he does this “to his own hurt.” The way that he rules over men is not right, and as a result great consequences come of it, to himself. There is a saying which is true in relation to unrighteous rulers; “Absolute power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” The reason for this is the total depravity of man. Sin in all men, and in every person, affects every part of their being. It affects their mind, their heart, and their will. It also affects the judgment of their conscience. And because of this, many rulers over men will not judge righteously because they are corrupt in their judgments and do not think that they need grace to straighten out their thinking.

Turn with me to Romans Chapter 2, verse 1. “Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.” “But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.” “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?” “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” “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.” You see here that the kindness and goodness of God is meant to lead every person to repentance; even kings and those in political power at all levels. But God, you should know, is full of mercy. He is full of kindness and goodness toward you. He is longsuffering toward you, in order to give you time to repent of all of your sins.

The question that we should ask ourselves is – Am I repenting? Our God is a God of great patience toward sinners. God exercises His patience towards sinful men, in order that they might come to repentance. He did this with the Apostle Paul, and He does this with all of His elect people. 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 1: 15 – “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.” “However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe.” But let us understand that knowing that you are one of God’s elect only comes when you will trust in Christ for your salvation, and be willing at every point, to do what is right. When you will trust in Christ, and repent of all your sins, and learn to do good, you will then come to know the that wonderful grace of the fear of the Lord.

**2<sup>nd</sup> – It will be well for those who fear before God in their time.** (verses 12 and 13)

Verse 12 says – “Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his days are prolonged, yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him.” Now interestingly, God Himself does not often execute His own sentence against an evil work speedily. It is certainly true that he can. But He has holy reasons that He does not do this often, or on a regular basis. If He did so, no one would survive His scrutiny or His judgments. Psalm 130, verses 1-4 – “Out of the depths I have cried to You, O Lord; Lord hear my voice!” “Let Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.” “If You Lord should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?” “But there is forgiveness with You, that You may feared.” It is only because of the working of God’s grace; His having mercy upon sinners, that the hearts of men are not fully set in them to do evil.

It is only by their asking for, and receiving the forgiveness of God, that God teaches men to fear Him. Total Depravity means that if we are left to ourselves, we will become worse and worse. “It will not be well with wicked; nor will he prolong his days, which are as a shadow,

because he does not fear before God,” it says in verse 13. 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 3: 13 says, “But evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” The only thing that changes men’s hearts is God’s giving them the grace to fear Him. And they must ask Him for this grace in prayer. A lesson that we should learn in relation to fearing God is that He does give us time to repent as a nation, but we must not abuse it. He looks carefully at our hearts and the hearts of our leaders, and He gives us a certain time to repent of our sins. The only thing that prevents us from hardening our hearts and becoming fully set in our hearts to do evil, is the grace of God which comes to us through the death and righteousness of Christ. And to have this rich grace active in our lives, we must learn to apply to Him to not receive it in vain, but to use it wisely.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 8: 35, we find Solomon himself applying to God for this grace. “When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You, when they pray toward this place and confess Your name, and turn from their sin because You afflict them, then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your servants, Your people Israel, that You may teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send rain on Your land which You have given to Your people as an inheritance.” “When there is famine in the land, pestilence or blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers; when their enemy besieges them in the land of their cities; whatever plague or whatever sickness there is; whatever prayer, whatever supplication is made by anyone, or by all Your people Israel, when each one knows the plague of his own heart, and spreads out his hands toward this temple: then hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive, and act, and give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart You know (for You alone know the hearts of men), that they may fear You all the days that they live in the land which You gave to our fathers.”

Ah, this is what we all need, whether we are leaders or not. What wonderful words these are: “Yet I surely know that it will be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him.” In closing let us consider the power and beauty of the fear of the Lord. Proverbs 14: 26 and 27 – “In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge.” The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death.” Proverbs 16: 6 – “In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity; and by the fear of the Lord one departs from evil.” Proverbs 19: 23 – “The fear of the Lord leads to life, and he who has it will abide in satisfaction; He will not be visited with evil.” All of these truths Solomon found, as king over Israel, and they gave him his supreme satisfaction in life. His confidence was that it would be well with him, even though he had made many mistakes in his judgment as king. God was faithful to watch over his soul and bring him to heaven, the place where God dwells. And God will do the same for you if you will fear before Him.