



[Ecclesiastes 5:8-12](#)

(8) 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. (9) Moreover the profit of the land is for all; *even* the king is served from the field.

(10) He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver;
Nor he who loves abundance, with increase.
This also *is* vanity.

(11) When goods increase,
They increase who eat them;
So what profit have the owners
Except to see *them* with their eyes?

(12) The sleep of a laboring man *is* sweet,
Whether he eats little or much;
But the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep.

New King James Version

Matthew 19:21-24 adds an important truth to help us understand these verses:

“If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”
But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the [kingdom of heaven](#). And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

First, the rich young man was so preoccupied by his material wealth that he really did not *hear* that Christ was offering him eternal life. Second, *anything* of this earth that we truly treasure can potentially influence us to so increase our fear of losing it as to cause us to choose not to hear Christ. The treasure does not have to be money. Third, no matter how great the distractive power of what we consider valuable, [God](#) stands ready to save us from it. Jesus did not say it was impossible.

No doubt, Solomon wants to help us with this spiritual struggle. He uses money as his main illustration because everybody easily relates to it. However, he does not introduce the subject of money until [Ecclesiastes 5:10](#). Instead, he writes of social injustice within the worldly system we live and function in. Why? Because the system itself is a constant source of distraction through its constant barrage of news reports in which we hear of social injustice. Most often, the poor are its targets.

He cautions us not to be astonished by the vanity of all this injustice, but at the same time, he wants us to be aware of it. He does this in verse 8 by mentioning “a high official watches over a high official, and higher officials are over them.” He seems to be saying that from bottom to top, the entire system is corrupt; every stratum of the culture struggles to make its way by taking advantage of others. Nevertheless, none of this injustice is an excuse for us to involve ourselves in the “everybody's doing it” routine and [sin](#) too.

A key to understanding what Solomon is driving at is the word translated “watches.” In Hebrew, the term can be used either positively or negatively. Positively, a person watches to protect or help, and negatively, he may have circumstances under surveillance to gain personal advantage from them. The present context is definitely negative. Solomon is still describing the self-centered attitudes of those “working” the system. Like their political leaders, ordinary citizens also greedily watch to gain the best and most for themselves. Their approach is not to serve and share. Verse 9 confirms that this self-centered attitude goes all the way to the top—to the king. He, too, is served by the corrupt system.

God has deemed it our responsibility to prepare for His Kingdom by overcoming, growing, and being loyal to Him and His way within such a

circumstance as Solomon describes in these last few verses. Our hope is promised in [Isaiah 9:6-7](#):

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of [Peace](#). Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

The solution to this present evil world is on the horizon, but it will not come until [Jesus Christ](#) is here with us on earth. Thus, God has willed that we must deal with the corrupt and unjust system that now is, looking forward in hope to the relief of Christ's return.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[Ecclesiastes and Christian Living \(Part Six\): Listening](#)

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The Berean: Daily Verse and Commentary for Ecclesiastes 5:8-12
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