



Daily Verse and Comment

Ecclesiastes 8:9-13

(9) All this I have seen, and I gave 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. (10) And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the holy place. And they were forgotten in the city where they had so done. This *is* also vanity. (11) Because 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. (12) Though a sinner does evil a hundred times, and his *days* are prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with those who fear God, who fear before Him. (13) But it shall not be well with the wicked, nor shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he does not fear before God.

A Faithful Version

This passage carries forward Solomon's thoughts on the use of power by a stern ruler who exercises his governing powers tyrannically (verses 5-8). How might it affect those of us living by [faith](#)? Verse 9 poses a circumstance that may prove critical for us, as even now our rulers in this nation are growing ever more dictatorial, and there seems to be no waning of governmental tyranny in sight.

This thought leads Solomon into commenting on a situation in verse 10 that seems to echo the paradox explored in middle of chapter 7. Realities within a community do not always follow the patterns that we expect to be fair and just. The wicked are sometimes blessed with long, comfortable lives and wealth, and are acclaimed as benefactors in the city. In contrast, the righteous are treated unjustly, suffering under the powerful wicked who bear rule over them. The persecutors grow stronger in their hatred while the righteous are pushed ever lower in the estimation of others.

Solomon is reminding us that occasions arise when a reversal of retribution and reward occurs. [Wisdom](#) is not the answer in every occasion. These reversals are undoubtedly happening in our nation at this very time. Cruel, persecuting sinners are being acclaimed and rewarded, while those practicing God's way are persecuted in the courts by being jailed and heavily fined, and their reputations are destroyed for their holding fast in obedience to God's laws. It is no wonder that Solomon declares these injustices to be vanity. This situation will produce no good results.

Verse 11 confirms that, because the governing authorities do not exercise the powers of their office, they tend to encourage the growth, both in their intensity and number, of the injustices being committed by the evildoers. This ugly truth reveals the depravity of the human heart. If evil deeds were swiftly punished, human nature would be deterred to some degree. However, the reality is that, because justice is often so painfully slow, people seem to get away with almost anything, even murder. Human nature eagerly follows the path of least resistance. If lawbreaking is not punished, it quickly proceeds to greater numbers and intensity.

We are living through such a time. Seeing [God](#) has not intervened to stop these injustices, people are taking advantage of His [forbearance](#). How should we view this? We must look on His delay positively—as a [merciful](#) gift to us—giving us more [time to repent](#), overcome, and grow. In addition, who knows how many more He will bring to [repentance](#) as He delays?

God clearly states in [Exodus 34:6](#) that He is “slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.” We must respond by holding fast in our faith to the loving wisdom by which He always proceeds. Paul writes in [Romans 2:4](#), “God's [kindness](#) is meant to lead you to repentance” (English Standard Version). The unconverted always abuse God's [patience](#) by making it an excuse for immorality. Scoffers always abound among those who do not know God ([II Peter 3:4](#)).

There is no doubt the wicked want the “good times” to keep on rolling for them. However, beginning in verse 12, God assures us that there will indeed be a final righting of all the injustices present in [this world](#). Even in verse 10, He gives a hint of this, declaring that the prosperous and publicly acclaimed

wicked will be buried and then forgotten. Their reputations are swallowed up in the grave along with their bodies and forgotten. Their names may indeed live on but only in infamy.

In verses 12-13, He strongly assures us that the righteous, though they also [sin](#) on occasion, will have their days prolonged, perhaps indicating everlasting life. But for the sinner who does not fear God, the future is bleak, like a shadow that vanishes when light disappears. Justice will be done. The wicked are not to be envied.

— John W. Ritenbaugh

To learn more, see:

[Ecclesiastes and Christian Living \(Part Fifteen\): Deference](#)

Related Topics:

[Divine Justice](#)

[Ecclesiastes and Christian Living](#)

[Ecclesiastes and Christian Living Deference](#)

[Ecclesiastes and Christian Living Paradox](#)

[Evil 'justice' system](#)

[God's Forbearance](#)

[God's Forbearance Meant to Lead us to Repentance](#)

[Paradox](#)