

Examples of authorities in our lives

Examples of how authorities  
may fall short of being right and good

What are we to do?

What is a **distinctly Christian response**  
to flawed human authorities, at any level?

1

## **When Authority is Flawed** **Ecclesiastes 8:2-17**

[ref.ly/Ec8;niv](https://ref.ly/Ec8;niv)



2

## Context of Author

Kings ruled with very few limits

"All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned the king has but one law: **that they be put to death** unless the king extends the gold scepter to them and spares their lives." Esther 4:11

3

## Ecclesiastes 8:2-9

Obey the king's command, I say, because you took an oath before God. <sup>3</sup> Do not be in a hurry to leave the king's presence. Do not stand up for a bad cause, for he will do whatever he pleases. <sup>4</sup> Since **a king's word is supreme**, who can say to him, "What are you doing?"

<sup>5</sup> Whoever obeys his command will come to no harm, and the wise heart will know To disagree  
the proper time and procedure. with the king

<sup>6</sup> For there is a proper time and procedure for every matter,  
though a person may be weighed down by misery.

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<sup>7</sup> Since no one knows the future,  
 who can tell someone else what is to come?  
<sup>8</sup> As no one has power over the wind to contain it,  
 so no one has power over the time of their death.  
 As no one is discharged in time of war,

so wickedness will not release  
 those who practice it.

<sup>9</sup> 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.

Everyone loses with an unjust ruler  
 And there is no easy escape

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### **Ecclesiastes 8:10-13**

<sup>10</sup> Then too, I saw the wicked buried—those who  
 used to come and go from the holy place and receive  
 praise in the city where they did this. This too is  
 meaningless.

<sup>11</sup> When the sentence for a crime is not quickly  
 carried out, people's hearts are filled with schemes  
 to do wrong. <sup>12</sup> Although a wicked person who  
 commits a hundred crimes may live a long time,

I know that it will go better with those who fear God,  
 who are reverent before him. <sup>13</sup> Yet because the  
 wicked do not fear God, it will not go well with them,  
 and their days will not lengthen like a shadow.

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## **Ecclesiastes 8:14-17**

<sup>14</sup> There is something else meaningless that occurs on earth: **the righteous who get what the wicked deserve, and the wicked who get what the righteous deserve.** This too, I say, is meaningless. <sup>15</sup> So I commend the enjoyment of life, because there is nothing better for a person under the sun than to eat and drink and be glad. Then joy will accompany them in their toil all the days of the life **God has given them** under the sun.

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<sup>16</sup> When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe the labor that is done on earth—people getting no sleep day or night— <sup>17</sup> then I saw all that God has done. No one can comprehend what goes on under the sun. Despite all their efforts to search it out, no one can discover its meaning. **Even if the wise claim they know, they cannot really comprehend it.**

**In our broken world, it is impossible to find a way to make it fully good and right**

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## The Big Idea

True peace can never be found  
through human goodness or reform or vengeance  
It only comes from God

"I say to the Lord, "You are my Lord;  
apart from you I have no good thing."" Psalm 16:2

"Our faith did not arise from the order of the world;  
the world's convulsions, therefore, need not destroy it"

9

Strengthen the feeble hands,  
steady the knees that give way;  
say to those with fearful hearts,  
"Be strong, do not fear;  
your God will come,  
**he will come with vengeance;**  
with divine retribution  
he will come to save you."

Isaiah 34:3-4

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So then, those who suffer according to God's will should **commit themselves to their faithful Creator** and **continue to do good.** 1 Peter 4:19

It requires TRUST because...  
what we see and experience  
does not favor those who do what is right

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## Application

Find peace by trusting/fearing God

- "Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times and in every way. The Lord be with all of you." 2 Thessalonians 3:16
- The Gospel = the Good News
  - "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, **we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**" Romans 5:1
  - "The **fruit of the Spirit** is love, joy, PEACE, ..." Galatians 5:22-23

12

**Do not repay anyone evil for evil.** Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. **Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath,** for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;  
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.  
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."  
**Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.**

Romans 12:17-21

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## Application

**Find peace by trusting/fearing God**

THEN pursue what is good and right wisely and carefully with contentment

- Peace can never come for human goodness or reform
- Peace from God is the foundation on which we can pursue goodness and justice and reform

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A heart that is at peace can pursue justice well  
A heart that is not at peace will plant more trouble

Stephen was killed because he spoke about Jesus

“While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “**Lord, do not hold this sin against them.**” When he had said this, he fell asleep.” Acts 7:59-60

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A heart that is at peace can pursue justice well  
A heart that is not at peace will plant more trouble

As Jesus was dying, He prayed: “**Father, forgive them,** for they do not know what they are doing.”  
Luke 23:34

16



## The Big Idea

True peace can never be found  
through human goodness or reform  
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Where are you experiencing injustice and oppression?

Where do you see injustice and oppression?

“So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should **commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.**” 1 Peter 4:19

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