

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

NOVEMBER 24TH, 2019 // BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES

Ecclesiastes 10 warns us of the dangers of folly and its ability to determine a person's life.

FOOLISHNESS & FOLLY (ECCLESIASTES 10:1-3)

Solomon has just spent the first part of Ecclesiastes trying to find life "under the sun" and concluding that it's all "vanity".

- Throughout the second half of his sermon, he gives us teaching on what living a life of substance and true wisdom actually looks like.
- The "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10)- once God is at the center of our lives, we have His wisdom guiding us.

Even a little bit of foolishness & folly can ruin a person's reputation and "outweigh wisdom and honor" (vs. 1).

- Leaving the lid open on a jar of expensive fragrant ointment could allow little flies and vermin to come in and ruin the perfume.
- The idea is that the wise person doesn't allow the little "flies" of folly to infest our lives so that it ruins what could be a sweet and pleasant aroma to God and others.

Wisdom & folly both depend on the inclinations of the heart (vs. 2).

- The "heart" in this sense is the center of one's life, the "master control" within us that governs the issues of life (Prov. 4:23).
- The right hand was the place of honor, the left represented weakness & rejection.
- If God's wisdom is in our hearts, we can be led appropriately, but if not, we're led to disaster.

Foolishness is a problem of the heart, but it doesn't stay embedded there.

- Inward folly will always manifest itself visibly through someone's lifestyle (vs. 3).
- Everything a fool does, even "walking on the road", lacks sense.
- Everything a fool says reveals to "everyone" that they're a fool.

THE FOOLISH LEADER (ECCLESIASTES 10:4-7)

Everyone needs wisdom, but leaders and rulers need an extra portion of it.

- Vs. 4 describes a ruler who lacks wisdom and lets their anger "rise against" others.
- If this happens to someone who is our leader, the wise response is control ourselves, stay right we are, and seek to bring peace through "calmness" and wisdom (vs. 4b).

Not only do foolish leaders give "full vent to their anger" (Prov. 29:11), they make terrible decisions about the people they appoint in other positions of leadership (vs. 5-7).

- Because of favoritism and preferential treatment, fools appoint unqualified and incompetent people to positions of leadership and demote qualified & competent people to low offices.

Someone who is foolish feels threatened by those who could give them wise and godly counsel, so a fool in leadership rarely appoints those who are actually wise and tell the truth.

- Such was the case of the Solomon's son Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:1-24).
- Instead of following the advice of wise counselors, he listened to his youthful friends.
- This led to the division of the kingdom!

The best kind of leaders (and rulers) are those who are self-controlled, unselfish, tough-minded, and tenderhearted.

- The best leaders are those who listen to godly counsel, but aren't afraid of making the tough (sometimes unpopular) decisions that are best for everyone, not just themselves.
- The best leaders are those who are humble, people-smart, and aren't afraid of hard work.

THE FOOLISH WORKER (ECCLESIASTES 10:8-11)

Inner foolishness always visibly manifests itself in our lives, and sometimes it shows itself in the simplest and most practical of ways.

- Solomon begins to describe people who attempted to do their work and suffered.
- He describes someone who dug a pit and fell into it, someone who broke through a wall and got bit by a snake, and those injured doing stone work and logging (vs. 8-9).

Accidents happen and they're not always our fault, however, it is foolishness that causes one to be careless and not take the proper precautions.

- Foolishness is also overconfident and doesn't look ahead to see what potential dangers might be lurking down the road (like, a "serpent", vs. 8b).
- The lesson here is that the consequences for carelessness, recklessness, and overconfidence could cost someone their life.

Verse 10 pictures a foolish worker who is trying to split wood with a dull ax and just makes his work harder and "must use more strength".

- The wise worker uses his wisdom to "help him succeed"- he pauses from his labor and sharpens his ax.

- A fool is unwilling to do the necessary work of preparation and discipline to prepare for success in his work.

Vs. 11 describes a snake charmer that gets bit by the snake "before it is charmed".

- This person was a fool because they rushed ahead and acted as if the snake was charmed before the snake was actually ready for the performance.
- Fools are impatient and they're led by greed.
- A wise person will be patient, wait, and do the proper preparation and planning.

THE FOOLISH TALKER (ECCLESIASTES 10:12-15)

A fool is not only known by their actions, they're known by their words.

- The nature of a fool's words is that they're destructive (vs. 12b).
- A fool blurts whatever is on their mind and doesn't consider who might be hurt by it.
- But in the end, it's the fool himself who is hurt most by their own words.
- The words of the wise "win him favor" (12a).

What a fool says doesn't even make sense and the longer they talk, the crazier and more delusional it becomes (vs. 13).

- Maybe it's because someone who is foolish isn't actually using their words to build people up, speak truth and accomplish good things, they're just filling the air
- Sometimes it's good to just keep quiet, and when we don't know what we're talking about it's alright to not say anything.

A fool "multiplies words" without realizing that he's actually saying nothing (vs. 14a).

- "Where words are many, transgression is not lacking" (Prov. 10:19)- it's possible to talk too much and say absolutely nothing.
- A fool is absolutely delusional and boastful with their words (vs. 14b).
- Foolish people talk about the future as if they know all about it or are in control of it.

There's a bit of humor in vs. 15- it describes a fool boasting about his future plans and wearying people with his talk, yet he can't even find the way to the city.

- In those days roads to cities were very well marked and obvious.
- But the fool is so busy talking about the future that he loses his way in the present!
- Foolishness in the present will lead to disaster in the future.

THE FOOLISH LEADER PT. 2 (ECCLESIASTES 10:16-20)

Solomon has already described foolish rulers and leaders, and now he describes in more detail how those in positions of authority can squander that leadership and lead many people to ruin.

- Vs. 16-17 describe "kings" & "princes" who are immature, indulgent, and selfish.
- Those placed in positions of authority who lack character bring "woe" to the land (vs. 16a).

But if that leader is the "son of nobility" (they have wisdom and character), they bring happiness and blessing to the land.

- Wise leaders use their authority to build the organization or the nation, but immature officeholders simply use the nation or organization to build their authority.
- How many times do we hear of leaders using public funds for their selfish purposes?

Foolish leaders are so busy with enjoyment they have no time for employment, so the buildings and the organizations they lead start to fall apart (vs. 18).

- Immature, selfish, and indulgent leaders are ultimately incompetent.
- Fools enjoy the privileges and ignore the responsibilities of leadership, while the wise see the responsibilities as privileges and use them to help others.

Vs. 19 declares the twisted indifference of a foolish leader's personal philosophy.

- For a fool in a position of authority or leadership, the point of the office is personal advancement.
- Whatever problems may exist in the nation or organization don't matter to a person like this so long as they personally have "bread" & "wine".
- "Money answers everything"- so long as this person has their paycheck, it doesn't matter what happens to anybody else.

The chapter ends with an additional teaching on the proper use of the tongue (vs. 20).

- The saying, "a little bird told me" probably originates from this verse and it's basically a warning to control our speech because gossip has a way of coming back to haunt us.
- We will be accountable for every careless word that we speak (Matt. 12:36), so wisdom is making sure our words bring blessings and not curses.

"THE FOOL SAYS IN HIS HEART, 'THERE IS NO GOD'..." PSALM 14:1

If we truly believe in our hearts that God is everything He says He is and that our eternity is shaped and determined by our lives NOW, that will drastically affect our behavior. We will be motivated by an eternal, God-honoring perspective- which is wisdom.