

Daily Bible Study

“The Fool and Foolishness” Part - 2

Ecclesiastes 10:11-20

September 29– October 5, 2013

MONDAY –We continue this week in our study of **Ecclesiastes** looking at **Chapter 10:11-20** and we will finish this chapter with **part - 2** of **The Fool and Foolishness**. We remember that when we introduced this chapter we mentioned Solomon uses the word “folly” or a derivative form some 9 times in the chapter. He is speaking to the dangers and power of foolishness. As an overarching thought which will help us see clearly into what Scripture is teaching us here, we need to keep in mind when Solomon speaks of wisdom, he is ultimately pointing to *that wisdom that makes wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3:15)*: and when he speaks of folly, he is ultimately pointing to the ignorance of the heart concerning Jesus. The Holy Spirit explains through Job’s pen this doctrine when He said, *Behold the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding (Job 28:28)*. As we move along now in this chapter let us always see the bigger picture here which points to Jesus and His work. He is Scripture’s “main point”. Let’s now read our text and begin to break down the specific things being taught here. **Ecclesiastes 10:11-20**: “A serpent may bite when it is not charmed; The babbling is no different. ¹²The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious, But the lips of a fool shall swallow him up; ¹³The words of his mouth begin with foolishness, And the end of his talk is raving madness. ¹⁴A fool also multiplies words. No man knows what is to be; Who can tell him what will be after him? ¹⁵The labor of fools wearies them, For they do not even know how to go to the city! ¹⁶Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child, And your princes feast in the morning! ¹⁷Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobles, And your princes feast at the proper time—For strength and not for drunkenness! ¹⁸Because of laziness the building decays, And through idleness of hands the house leaks. ¹⁹A feast is made for laughter, And wine makes merry; but money answers everything. ²⁰Do not curse the king, even in your thought; Do not curse the rich, even in your bedroom; For a bird of the air may carry your voice, And a bird in flight may tell the matter.”

Suggestion for Prayer: Father God, help me learn from Your Word this week not only being warned and taught concerning folly but to see the source of true wisdom, wisdom itself, Your Son my Lord. Help me look to Him be faith and trust Him always.

TUESDAY – **Ecclesiastes 10:11-13**: “A serpent may bite when it is not charmed; The babbling is no different. ¹²The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious, But the lips of a fool shall swallow him up; ¹³The words of his mouth begin with foolishness, And the end of his talk

is raving madness.” Folly and foolishness in ones talk is now addressed as Solomon writes concerning the public nature of this absurdity. Solomon’s wise council will be reiterated by James who in the NT gives strong warning to us about misuse of our tongues (**James 3:1-12**). The *babbling* is like an uncharmed snake and just as deadly. Snake charmers were more common in those days (**Psalms 58:4–5, Jeremiah 8:17**). Solomon alludes to a foolish charmer who rushed into an entertainment “performance” to collect and move on without properly charming the snake and he got bit...show over. Solomon now goes on to describe various methods of folly pertaining to unwise use of the tongue. In **verse 12** he speaks about the devouring nature of the foolish tongue. We had mentioned the power of foolishness earlier and here it is illustrated. The Psalmist also weighs in on this very theme in **Psalms 52:4**: “*You love all words that devour, O deceitful tongue -ESV.*” The comparison between the wise man and the fool is powerful. When a wise man speaks, the effect is gracious (*seasoned with salt-Colossians 4:6*) speech but a fool’s words lead only to destruction. The fool’s speech is ungracious and he blurts out whatever is on his mind and doesn’t stop to consider who might be hurt by it. Contrary to that, the wise man’s speech is thought out and it heals and builds up. This is how our Lord talked (**Isaiah 50:4**). **Verse 13** tells us the words that begin as mere foolishness end as *raving madness*. He talks and it doesn’t make sense. As is said, “He would be better not talking and have people think him a fool then open his mouth and remove all doubt”. This is the person who is the expert on everything mentioned in ANY conversation and they will tell you ALL about it. Writer Shalom Aleichem said, “You can tell when a fool speaks: he grinds much and produces little.” We need to ask The Lord to put a guard over our lips and tongues (**Psalms 141:3**) for what begins as a little foolish talk becomes a pathological condition. An act of the moment becomes a state of being.

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me understand the power in this little member of my body, the tongue. Teach me to build others up with it and season lives and moments with tasty and wise preserving speech. Save me from babbling raving madness but instead speak like You Lord to the benefit and edification of all who hear (Ephesians 4:29).

WEDNESDAY – **Ecclesiastes 10:14-15** “¹⁴A fool also multiplies words. No man knows what is to be; Who can tell him what will be after him? ¹⁵The labor of fools wearies them, For they do not even know how to go to the city!” There is a wide range of practical lessons for us to learn as we come **verses 14-15**. One thing Solomon mentions about the foolish speaker and speech is that the fool mistakes quality with quantity as seen in **verse 14**. Jesus said be careful about *vain repetition* when talking in prayer (**Matthew 6:7**) and the lesson is a wise one. “*He who guards his mouth preserves his life, but he who opens wide his lips shall have destruction*” (**Proverbs 13:3**). “*Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles*” (**Proverbs 21:23**). Another aspect of foolish speech and a foolish speaker is that he has a lot of words but doesn’t say anything. Also with much speaking there is a greater risk of sinning with our tongue (“*In the multitude of words, sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise*”

Proverbs 10:19). The person who can control his or her tongue is able to discipline the entire body according to **James 3:1–2**. We should ask God for this discipline and strive to attain it as well as be simple and straightforward with what we say and don't say remembering Jesus' words of wisdom when He instructs us, "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes' and your 'No' be 'No.' For whatever is more than this is from the evil one" **Matthew 5:37**. Foolish people also talk about the future as though they either know all about it or are in control of what will happen. This is against Biblical instruction: "Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth" (**Proverbs 27:1**, also **James 4:13-17**). Solomon has emphasized man's ignorance of the future in this book and it is a truth that wise people receive but fools reject. The last phrase of **verse 15** is somewhat humorous although it is also very sad. The fool boasts about his future plans and wearies people with his talk, but he can't even find the way to the city. In Bible times, the roads to the cities were well-marked so that any traveler could find his way, but the fool is so busy talking about the future that he loses his way in the present. This phrase, "He can't find his way to the city" was probably an ancient proverb about stupidity and ignorance not unlike phrases we use today to express those thoughts.

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, teach me to talk like a wise man and not a fool. May I listen to the instruction of Jesus and be clear and honest when I speak. May I also heed the command of James to be quick to listen and slow to speak. Thank You for forgiving me for so many of these embarrassing, insulting and God dishonoring sins of my tongue.

THURSDAY – Ecclesiastes 10:16-18: ¹⁶Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child, And your princes feast in the morning! ¹⁷Blessed are you, O land, when your king is the son of nobles, And your princes feast at the proper time—For strength and not for drunkenness! ¹⁸Because of laziness the building decays, And through idleness of hands the house leaks." Solomon now returns to folly and foolishness in national and political life if you will. He first mentions the monumental necessity for maturity in leadership. This does not rule out all young leaders but it does stress the fact that immaturity in a leader is a recipe for disaster. The young leader must make up for his lack of experience by seeking and consulting with those who have more experience than him. *Child* is contrasted with *the son of nobles* who pictures someone who may be young, but who has grown into his position and has been prepared for it. As mentioned, although age is no guarantee of maturity (**1 Corinthians 3:1–4**, **Hebrews 5:11–14**), the church is instructed not to make quick and hasty appointments of immature believers into offices of leadership (**1 Timothy 3:6**). It is a judgment of God when a people are given immature leaders (**Isaiah 3:1–5**). How do we become mature you may ask? Oswald Chambers said, "Spiritual maturity is not reached by the passing of the years, but by obedience to the will of God." Another character trait that is foolish for leadership is incompetence and laziness. Here we see it is the laziness of the ruler that will allow decay. The Bible speaks of our required diligence in all matters, especially those relating to our service of God (**1 Timothy 4:15**, **Hebrews 6:11**). These foolish leaders in our text are so busy

with feasting and drunkenness that they have no time for working on needs and both the buildings and the organization start to fall apart. He is wasting with his laziness and incompetence. "He also who is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster" (**Proverbs 18:9**). What is being taught which we need to learn and beware of is that immature people enjoy the privileges and ignore the responsibilities, while mature people see the responsibilities as privileges and use them to help others. Being in leadership gives great opportunity to either be proud and lazy or humble and serving. It was former leader and President Woodrow Wilson who wrote, "A friend of mine says that every man who takes office in Washington either grows or swells; when I give a man an office, I watch him carefully to see whether he is swelling or growing."

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me to see where You have placed me in a position of leadership and heed these directives on how to lead in wisdom and how not to lead in folly. May I be faithful to observe these things whether I lead merely a small number of people such as in my family setting or a larger group elsewhere. Help me to be faithful to pray for those You have placed in leadership that they would follow Your commands and rule wisely.

FRIDAY – Ecclesiastes 10:19-20: ¹⁹A feast is made for laughter, And wine makes merry; but money answers everything. ²⁰Do not curse the king, even in your thought; Do not curse the rich, even in your bedroom; For a bird of the air may carry your voice, And a bird in flight may tell the matter." Solomon appears to be describing a foolish ruler's attitude in this **verse 19**. He has abandoned responsibilities for leisure and pleasure. He has no concern for others and those he is to lead and serve rather money has become his god—his answer to problems. His way of living is to have a lavish comfortable lifestyle which sadly is marked with indifference to God and others. The prophet Amos reminds us God will judge him for it (**Amos 2:7, 4:1, 5:11–12**). *Money answers everything* as it becomes the universal means of procuring supply to all our earthly wants and what money is to the carnal man Jesus is to the spiritual. He is meat to the hungry, and water to the thirsty; clothes to the naked, medicine to the sick, warmth to the cold, in short, all things for life, for light, for peace, for joy, and comfort. *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. He that overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.* **Revelation 21:6, 7**. We all have heard the phrase, "A little birdie told me" and it finds its origins here in Ecclesiastes. Solomon uses it as a word of warning to the person who thinks he will not be overheard when speaking ill of others. He goes as far as to say, ²⁰Do not curse the king, even in your thought. Thoughts find there expression in words so it's wise not to keep dynamite on hand so to speak and harbor dangerous thoughts which may blow up suddenly without warning.

Suggestion for Prayer: Father, help me not have this foolish attitude that money and things will satisfy me. You are all I need and may I see that and believe that. Again, help me keep a watch on both my thoughts and words so that they both glorify You and build others up.