

# Ecclesiastes 10 - The Danger of Folly

V. Conclusion regarding Solomon's search for the ultimate meaning in various sources (Eccl 8:16—12:7)

(1) Where ultimate meaning is not found (Eccl 8:16—10:20)

(C) Wise living (Eccl 9:13—10:20)

(c) Foolishness destroys wisdom (9:18b—10:1)

(d) Wise living can fail (10:2-7)

(e) Wise living can be nullified through carelessness and bad timing (10:8-11)

(f) Wise speech (10:12-20)

(i) Foolishness of many words (10:12-15)

(ii) Foolishness of criticizing profligate rulers since your words will be discovered (10:16-20)

## Ecclesiastes 10

(c) Foolishness destroys wisdom (9:18b—10:1)

1 Dead flies turn a perfumer's oil rancid, so a little foolishness is more potent than wisdom *and* honor.

1 Dead flies make a perfumer's oil stink, so a little foolishness is weightier than wisdom *and* honor.

1 As dead flies cause the perfumer's ointment to stink, so also does a little foolishness to one's reputation of wisdom and honor.

1 Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.

(d) Wise living can fail (10:2-7)

2 A wise person's heart *directs him* toward the right, but the foolish person's heart *directs him* toward the left.

2 A wise man's heart *directs him* toward the right, but the foolish man's heart *directs him* toward the left.

2 A wise man's heart tends toward his right, but a fool's heart tends toward his left.

2 A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left.

3 Even when the fool walks along the road, his sense is lacking, and he demonstrates to everyone *that* he is a fool.

3 Even when the fool walks along the road, his sense is lacking and he demonstrates to everyone *that* he is a fool.

3 Furthermore, the way a fool lives shows he has no sense; he proclaims to everyone that he's a fool.

3 Yea also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool.

4 If the ruler's temper rises against you, do not abandon your place, because composure puts great offenses to rest.

4 If the ruler's temper rises against you, do not abandon your position, because composure allays great offenses.

4 If your overseer gets angry at you, don't resign, because calmness pacifies great offenses.

4 If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences.

5 There is an evil I have seen under the sun, like a mistake that proceeds from the ruler:

5 There is an evil I have seen under the sun, like an error which goes forth from the ruler—

5 Here's another tragedy that I've observed on earth, a kind of error that comes from an overseer:

5 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, as an error which proceedeth from the ruler:

6 foolishness is set in many exalted places while the rich sit in humble places.

6 folly is set in many exalted places while rich men sit in humble places.

6 Foolishness is given great honor, while the prosperous sit in lowly places.

6 Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place.

7 I have seen slaves *riding* on horses and princes walking like slaves on the land.

7 I have seen slaves *riding* on horses and princes walking like slaves on the land.

7 And I have observed servants riding on horses, while princes walk on the ground like servants.

7 I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth.

(e) Wise living can be nullified through carelessness and bad timing (10:8-11)

8 One who digs a pit may fall into it, and a serpent may bite one who breaks through a wall.

8 He who digs a pit may fall into it, and a serpent may bite him who breaks through a wall.

8 Whoever digs a pit may fall into it, and whoever breaks through a wall may suffer a snake bite.

8 He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.

9 One who quarries stones may be hurt by them, and one who splits logs may be endangered by them.

9 He who quarries stones may be hurt by them, and he who splits logs may be endangered by them.

9 Someone who quarries stone might be injured; someone splitting logs can fall into danger.

9 Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith; and he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby.

10 If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen *its* edge, then he must exert *more* strength. Wisdom *has* the advantage of bringing success.

10 If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen *its* edge, then he must exert more strength. Wisdom has the advantage of giving success.

10 If someone's ax is blunt—the edge isn't sharpened— then more strength will be needed. Putting wisdom to work will bring success.

10 If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: but wisdom is profitable to direct.

11 If the serpent bites before being charmed, there is no benefit for the charmer.

11 If the serpent bites before being charmed, there is no profit for the charmer.

11 If a serpent strikes despite being charmed, there's no point in being a snake charmer.

11 Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment; and a babbler is no better.

(f) Wise speech (10:12-20)

(i) Foolishness of many words (10:12-15)

12 Words from the mouth of a wise person are gracious, while the lips of a fool consume him;

12 Words from the mouth of a wise man are gracious, while the lips of a fool consume him;

12 The words spoken by the wise are gracious, but the lips of a fool will devour him.

12 The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself.

13 the beginning of his talking is foolishness, and the end of it is evil insanity.  
13 the beginning of his talking is folly and the end of it is wicked madness.  
13 He begins his speech with foolishness, and concludes it with evil madness.  
13 The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness.

14 Yet the fool multiplies words. No person knows what will happen, and who can tell him what will come after him?

14 Yet the fool multiplies words. No man knows what will happen, and who can tell him what will come after him?

14 The fool overflows with words, and no one can predict what will happen. As to what will happen after him, who can explain it?"

14 A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him?

15 The labor of a fool makes him so weary that he does not *even* know how to go to a city.

15 The toil of a fool so wearies him that he does not *even* know how to go to a city.

15 The work of a fool so wears him out that he can't even find his way to town.

15 The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.

(ii) Foolishness of criticizing profligate rulers since your words will be discovered (10:16-20)

16 Woe to you, land whose king is a boy, and whose princes feast in the morning.

16 Woe to you, O land, whose king is a lad and whose princes feast in the morning.

16 Woe to the land whose king is a youth and whose princes feast in the morning.

16 Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning!

17 Blessed are you, land whose king is of nobility, and whose princes eat at the appropriate time—for strength and not for drunkenness.

17 Blessed are you, O land, whose king is of nobility and whose princes eat at the appropriate time—for strength and not for drunkenness.

17 That land is blessed whose king is of noble birth, whose princes feast at the right time, for strength, and not to become drunk.

17 Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness!

18 Through extreme laziness the rafters sag, and through idleness the house leaks.

18 Through indolence the rafters sag, and through slackness the house leaks.

18 Through slothfulness the roof deteriorates, and a house leaks because of idleness.

18 By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.

19 *People* prepare a meal for enjoyment, wine makes life joyful, and money is the answer to everything.

19 *Men* prepare a meal for enjoyment, and wine makes life merry, and money is the answer to everything.

19 Festivals are for laughter, wine makes life pleasant, and money speaks to everything.

19 A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all things.

20 Furthermore, in your bedroom do not curse a king, and in your sleeping rooms do not curse a rich person; for a bird of the sky will bring the sound, and the winged one will make *your* word known.

20 Furthermore, in your bedchamber do not curse a king, and in your sleeping rooms do not curse a rich man, for a bird of the heavens will carry the sound and the winged creature will make the matter known.

20 Do not curse the king, even in your thoughts. Do not curse the rich, even in your bedroom. For a bird will fly by and tell what you say, or something with wings may talk about it.

20 Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.