

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown  
Bible Study Notes: Ecclesiastes 10

*"Foolishness"*

5/29/13

**SUMMARY**

Solomon continues to share wisdom that can help endure the many vanities in life. This chapter is filled with proverbial statements, in which he first deplores folly and the affect it can have on one's reputation (1-3).

Solomon also describes how folly is often manifested in government, and in one's life and labors. The land suffers when governed by foolish men, and labor is made even more difficult. Yet wisdom can bring success to one's endeavors, and blessings to the land when found in the conduct of those who lead (4-20).

**I. FOLLY DEPLORED (10:1-3)**

*As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor. <sup>2</sup> The heart of the wise inclines to the right, but the heart of the fool to the left. <sup>3</sup> Even as fools walk along the road, they lack sense and show everyone how stupid they are.*

**A. IT MARS THE FINEST OF REPUTATIONS (1)**

1. Like dead flies putrefy the perfumer's ointment
2. So folly is to one respected for wisdom and honor

**B. IT SERVES AS AN UNSAFE GUIDE (2)**

1. The wise man's heart is at his right hand
2. The fool's heart is at his left hand (in the wrong place)

**C. IT BETRAYS ITS OWN STUPIDITY (3)**

1. A fool walks along the way without wisdom
2. He shows everyone that he is a fool

**II. FOLLY MANIFESTED (10:4-20)**

*<sup>4</sup> If a ruler's anger rises against you, do not leave your post; calmness can lay great offenses to rest. <sup>5</sup> There is an evil I have seen under the sun, the sort of error that arises from a ruler: <sup>6</sup> Fools are put in many high positions, while the rich occupy the low ones. <sup>7</sup> I have seen slaves on horseback, while princes go on foot like slaves. <sup>8</sup> Whoever digs a pit may fall into it; whoever breaks through a wall may be bitten by a snake. <sup>9</sup> Whoever quarries stones may be injured by them; whoever splits logs may be endangered by them. <sup>10</sup> If the ax is dull and its edge unsharpened, more strength is needed, but skill will bring success. <sup>11</sup> If a snake bites before it is charmed, the charmer receives no fee.*

*<sup>12</sup> Words from the mouth of the wise are gracious, but fools are consumed by their own lips. <sup>13</sup> At the beginning their words are folly; at the end they are wicked madness—<sup>14</sup> and fools multiply words. No one knows what is coming—who can tell someone else what will happen after them? <sup>15</sup> The toil of fools wearies them; they do not know the way to town. <sup>16</sup> Woe to the land whose king was a servant and whose princes feast in the morning. <sup>17</sup> Blessed is the land whose king is of noble birth and whose princes eat at a proper time—for strength and not for drunkenness. <sup>18</sup> Through laziness, the rafters sag; because of idle hands, the house leaks. <sup>19</sup> A feast is made for laughter, wine makes life merry, and money is the answer for everything. <sup>20</sup> Do not revile the king even in your thoughts, or curse the rich in your bedroom, because a bird in the sky may carry your words, and a bird on the wing may report what you say.*

#### **A. WHEN THE SPIRIT OF THE RULER RISES AGAINST YOU (4)**

1. Do not leave your post
2. Allow conciliation to pacify great offense

#### **ECCLESIASTES 10:4**

This proverb has implications for employer/employee relationships. Employees should ride out the temper tantrums of their employer. If we quietly do our work and don't get upset, the employer will probably get over his or her anger and calm down.

#### **B. WHEN FOLLY IS MANIFESTED IN GOVERNMENT AND LABOR (5-20)**

1. An evil observed by Solomon (5-7)
  - a. Error proceeding from the ruler
  - b. Folly exalted while the rich are debased
  - c. Servants in power while true princes are humbled

#### **ECCLESIASTES 10:5-7**

By describing these circumstances that aren't fair or don't make sense, Solomon is saying that wealth alone can't bring justice. Solomon continues to build to his conclusion that everything we have (from wisdom to riches) is nothing without God. But when God uses what little we have, it becomes all we could ever want or need.

2. Those who labor with foolishness hurt and hinder themselves (8-10)
  - a. As illustrated through several examples given by Solomon
  - b. The wisdom of the wise will know how to expedite his labors

#### **ECCLESIASTES 10:10**

Trying to do anything without the necessary skills or tools is like chopping wood with a dull ax. If your tool is dull, you should sharpen it to do a better job. Similarly, if you lack skills, you should sharpen them through training and practice. "Sharpening the blade" means recognizing where a problem exists, acquiring or honing the skills (or tools) to do the job better, and then going out and doing it. Find the areas of your life where your "ax" is dull, and sharpen your skills so you can be more effective for God's work.

3. The foolish seldom know how to restrain themselves (11-15)
  - a. They do not know how to hold their tongues
  - b. They do not know how to direct their labor
  
4. How folly and wisdom affect the condition of the country (16-19)
  - a. Woe to the land whose leaders...
    - 1) Are childish and feast in the morning
    - 2) Are lazy, resulting in broken down buildings
  - b. Blessed is the land whose leaders...
    - 1) Feast at the proper time
    - 2) Successfully rule, providing for true happiness and meeting every need

### ECCLESIASTES 10:16-18

When the Israelites had immature and irresponsible leaders, their nation fell. The books of 1 and 2 Kings describe the decline of the kingdoms when the leaders were concerned only about themselves. These verses pinpoint the basic problems of these leaders—selfishness and laziness.

### ECCLESIASTES 10:19

Government leaders, businesses, families, even churches get trapped into thinking money is the answer to every problem. We throw money at our problems. But just as the thrill of wine is only temporary, the soothing effect of the last purchase soon wears off, and we have to buy more. Scripture recognizes that money is necessary for survival, but it warns against the love of money (see Matthew 6:24; 1 Timothy 6:10; Hebrews 13:5). Money is dangerous because it deceives us into thinking that wealth is the easiest way to get everything we want. The love of money is sinful because we trust money rather than God to solve our problems. Those who pursue its empty promises will one day discover that they have nothing because they are spiritually bankrupt.

5. Be careful what you say (20)
  - a. Do not curse the king
  - b. Do not curse the rich
  - c. For what you say will likely reach their ears