

**Ecclesiastes 10: 5-10; “Wisdom Brings Success”, Message # 69 in the series –
“Remembering Your Creator”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
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The summary statement of these 6 verses is that “wisdom brings success”. These verses are applicable first of all to those who rule; to those who are in authority. But they can also be applied to all who are engaged in any practical task where they themselves or others around them might be hurt by mistakes which they make. Wisdom is needed in order to bring success to the task. So, conversely, we can also reasonably conclude that allowing evil or error into our thinking will bring failure and trouble into our lives. And these errors may defeat or delay the completion of our task, or they may prevent the success of the very tasks and projects that we wish to accomplish. There are here, in verses 5-9, three examples of errors made by those who are engaged in very practical occupations. And then follows a piece of wise advice given as a conclusion by Solomon, to those who would practically cut off these kinds of errors.

The 1st example of error which is mentioned is that of folly being set in great dignity. The 2nd example of error is that of a man who is digging a pit and he falls into it. The 3rd example or error is of a person who is quarrying stones, or splitting wood; his being in danger of being hurt by his own carelessness. The concluding application which is given is that whether it is the ruler or the common laborer, they must pay particular attention to themselves and to the way that they think and work in order to succeed in the task that they are doing. I will make that application at the end of the message. I am hoping that this study will help us to determine who we should vote for in the upcoming elections, and how we ourselves should work and live to God’s glory.

1st of all – The 1st example of error is of folly being set in great dignity. (verses 5-7)

The error being spoken of here is proceeding from the ruler. In other words, it is his fault that as it says in verse 6 – “Folly is set in great dignity while the rich sit in a lowly place.” It is the ruler’s fault that he had seen “servants on horses, while princes walked on the ground like servants”. The ruler of a nation will set the policies which will either set folly in great dignity or righteousness in great dignity. Folly is that which proceeds from the weak moral character or conduct of a man who does not want to consider God or His law. The fool has said in his heart, there is no God. There is in the ruler who is foolish a weakness of judgment or character in relation to their actions. Specifically, he promotes folly. Folly is when a person allows or promotes bad moral conduct, or wickedness, or sensual wantonness; not only in himself, but also the freedom for others to do the very same things or worse. He does not want to understand his way before God or man.

Proverbs 14: 7 and 8 says – “Go from the presence of a foolish man, when you do not perceive in him the lips of knowledge.” “The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way, but the folly of fools is deceit.” So we see here that when folly is set in great dignity it results in the further moral decline in all levels of society as a result. The lesson to be learned is that the ruler must set a good moral example himself in order to see the people in his country become moral citizens. The “rich” who are mentioned as “sitting in a lowly place”, in verse 6 of our text, are not simply those who are materially wealthy. They are also, as John Gill says, “men rich in wisdom and knowledge, men of large capacities (that is – they are men of great ideas and know how to go about to get things done). “They have great endowments of mind, and so abundantly qualified for posts in the administration of government; and above all, men rich in grace, fearing God, and hating covetousness, as rulers ought to be.”

Folly, here in the context, is “the rich sitting in a lowly place.” It is also described as Solomon’s seeing, “servants on horses”. These were things that should not have been taking

place, or seen, in that society. Let us ask ourselves why? Why should a ruler, or a person in authority not rule in this way; being merciful to fools and handing out money and position and power to those who do not know how to use it? Well, if you will look at Proverbs 14: 24 you will find the answer. “The crown of the wise is their riches, but the foolishness of fools is folly.” Here we see that fools think of their foolishness as riches. But the wise man, the man who seeks to do what is right becomes rich in the right way; rich in spiritual riches of wisdom and knowledge of the Scriptures first, and then God blessing that man with wealth and riches in his house. You can see this order mentioned in Psalm 112: 1-3, where it says – “Praise the Lord!” “Blessed is the man who fears the Lord, who delights greatly in His commandments.” “His descendants will be mighty on earth; the generation of the upright will be blessed.” “Wealth and riches will be in his house, and his righteousness endures forever.”

This principle will be abundantly proved to be true in the life of each person who seeks to put it into practice in their life. The requirement to come to know real blessing? It is that people learn to fear the Lord. The consequence of learning to fear the Lord? It will be that the man and his descendants will be mighty on the earth, being blessed, and having wealth and riches. This is not a prosperity gospel that is being talked about. For as Matthew Henry says, “Wealth and riches shall be in the upright man’s house, not in his heart (for he is none of those in whom the love of money reigns), perhaps not so much in his hand (for he only begins to raise the estate), but in his house; his family shall grow rich when he is gone.” “But that which is much better is that they shall be blessed with spiritual blessings, which are the true riches.”

This all comes about because in God’s mind, and in the minds of people who are thinking rightly, it is not folly that should be set in great dignity; it is right moral conduct that should be set in dignity and rewarded in society. Rulers on earth should be like God who is in heaven ruling over all things righteously. Listen to Proverbs 29: 2. It says – “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when a wicked man rules, the people groan.” You can see here that righteous ruling of a nation causes its citizens to rejoice, because their real and true and lasting interests are established. God’s laws in accordance with the 10 commandments are promoted so that people are truly helped forward in a moral, good, and decent sense. When good laws, which are based upon the 10 commandments are broken, then suitable punishments are given to the offender.

Listen to verse 4 – “The king establishes the land by justice, but he who receives bribes overthrows it.” Hereby the character of the ruler is tested. Hereby are the President, the Congressmen, and the Judges of our land tested. Will they receive bribes from wealthy but unscrupulous men; men who want to try to buy his helping them out with their interests, even if their interests are sinful, unrighteous, or give them some unfair advantage over others? Will they cater to public opinions which may influence them to attempt to alter righteous laws by crying for greater freedom to sin? This is what is happening in our society today with adultery, prostitution, abortion, homosexuality, same-sex marriage, and many other gross sins being promoted or made legal. Listen to verse 12 of Proverbs 29 – “If a ruler pays attention to lies, all his servants become wicked. Therefore, how important it is for the ruler to be a man of truth and a man of his word.

Look back at verse 3. “Whoever loves wisdom makes his father rejoice, but a companion of harlots wastes his wealth.” Whether this is relating to the son of a king or the son of an ordinary citizen, the father ought to restrain his sons from immorality in all its many forms. The king, or the Executive branch of government, in co-operation with the legislative branch of government, ought to so exercise their authority that morality and decency are promoted in society. This is done by putting persons into authority under them who will take action to enact legislation and speak to these vitally good things for society. The citizens of the country ought to elect their best most Biblically righteous men to these most important positions of authority. The men they

elect should cover the naked and not give rights to the people in order that they to become slaves of sexual corruption. These supposed freedoms to sexual sin are not liberty, they are bondage. Persons of poor moral judgment, bad character, or sensually lewd persons should not be elected or appointed to rule in government, or to occupy positions of authority and responsibility, or to make laws. They should not be given money or positions if they have not the power to be righteous or intelligent in the decisions that they make.

A man should only be promoted to such a position when he has shown himself wise and righteous in his works. Listen to Proverbs 28: 2 – “Because of the transgression of a land, many are its princes; but by a man of understanding and knowledge right will be prolonged.” This verse is saying that many people will compete with each other to be the next in line to rule if there is much transgression in the land. They will stand in line to make sure that their supposed freedoms to sin will continue. But the man of Biblical understanding and knowledge will also seek to have righteousness continue and be prolonged in the land.

Let us ask ourselves now, whether we are willing, not only to be righteous for ourselves, but whether we are willing to promote righteousness in our society politically? If we are not willing, we should understand that transgression will increase and our society will become more unstable morally, and more liable to the judgments of God. We must seek to share our knowledge of Biblical truth while we have life and breath, for the sake of God’s honor, and for the sake of our children’s spiritual well-being and political freedom, in terms of doing what is good and right and seeing that promoted in society.

The 2nd example of error is of a man digging a pit who falls into it.

Verse 8 – “He who digs a pit will fall into it, and whoever breaks through a wall will be bitten by a serpent.” Two little parabolic sayings here; once again referring to how a leader rules, and whether the people he rules over, will be righteous. The principle of truth in the first saying refers to a person digging a pit by his own moral stupidity; his trying to break through the wall of what is morally right. They are a person who digs a pit for someone else, to trap them in it, and then they end up falling into their own trap, because they do not understand that God is watching them, and they do not see that he is well able to bring them into judgment for what they are doing, or what they are attempting to do.

This is what happened to Haman in the book of Esther. His plan was to exterminate all of the Jews because he hated Mordecai, but God so worked, that by His providence, Haman “fell into his own pit”, and he was hanged on his own gallows, once his evil thoughts and deeds were exposed. We also read of Joseph’s brother’s casting him into a pit because they hated him, but their evil deed came back to haunt them later on, when God providentially brought them into trouble over it. The principle is enunciated very clearly for us in Psalm 7, verse 14. “Behold the wicked brings forth iniquity; yes he conceives trouble and brings forth falsehood.” “He made a pit and dug it out, and has fallen into the ditch which he made.” And you also find this truth mentioned in Psalm 9, verses 15 and 16, on the level of nations. It says there – “The nations have sunk down in the pit which they made; in the net which they hid, their own foot is caught.” “The Lord is known by the judgments He executes; the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands.”

So the Scriptures are clear, that whoever breaks through the boundaries and barriers which God has given to all men in His law, will be bit by the serpent of a stinging conscience. And the prospect of their having to deal with the consequences of having their sin exposed, it says, will overwhelm in their their ability to deal with it, and God will see to it, that in his time, He will bring into judgment over it. Turn with me over to Proverbs Chapter 23, verse 29. Sometimes folly has been placed into the high places of society to make it look like a very dignified thing to drink alcoholic beverages like wine. But look what it says here – “Who has woe?” “Who has sorrow?” “Who has contentions?” “Who has complaints?” “Who has wounds without cause?”

“Who has redness of eyes?” “Those who linger long at the wine, those who go in search of mixed wine.” “Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper.” “Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things.” “Yes, you will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, or like one who lies down at the top of the mast, saying: ‘They have struck me, but I was not hurt; they have beaten me, but I did not feel it.’” “When shall I awake, that I may seek another drink?”

Couple this with **Proverbs 31: 2** and following – “What, my son?” “And what, son of my womb” “And what, son of my vows?” “Do not give your strength to women, nor your ways to that which destroys kings.” “It is not for kings, O Lemuel, it is not for kings to drink wine, nor for princes intoxicating drink; lest they drink and forget the law, and pervert the justice of all the afflicted.” “Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those who are bitter of heart.” “Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.” Brethren, let us see the folly of the supposed wisdom of drinking wine or intoxicating drink. Let us resolve rather to be filled with the Spirit, whether we are young or whether we are old. No stinging of the conscience there. None of the venom of sin to poison our souls there.

The 3rd example or error which we find is that of a person who is quarrying stones or splitting wood being in danger of being hurt by their own carelessness.

Verse 9 says, “He who quarries stones may be hurt by them, and he who splits wood may be endangered by it.” The quarrying of stones was used in building great buildings such as the temple in the Old Testament times. The person who split wood was doing a very necessary work in the days before gas furnaces. The error which may occur, of being hurt doing the work, would most often have come about through carelessness. The Christian is a worker together with God, and a worker for God. They cannot afford to be careless in the way that they go about to do their work. Wisdom and strength prayed for in relation to our work for Christ will insure that the stones will be cut right, and that the wood for the fire of heat and warmth will be there when it is needed. In the great projects and undertakings of helping to build Christ’s Church, His temple, and in the little everyday undertakings to provide warmth and comfort for ourselves and God’s people, we must remember to pray and have the faith to believe that God will be our helper in all things that we undertake for Him. We do not want to hurt ourselves and we do not want to hurt others.

Prayer for wisdom will be that which will sharpen the edge of the ax blade so that we can help in the building of the temple of God. We want to work in the way of understanding, so that God will be glorified. Proverbs 9: 1 – “Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars; she has slaughtered her meat, she has mixed her wine.” “She has also furnished her table.” “She has sent out her maidens, she cries out from the highest places of the city, whoever is simple, let him turn in here!” “As for him who lacks understanding, she says to him, ‘come eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed.’” “Forsake foolishness and live, and go in the way of understanding.” “He who corrects a scoffer gets shame for himself, and he who rebukes a wicked man only harms himself.” “Do not correct a scoffer, lest he hate you; rebuke a wise man, and he will love you.” “Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.” This is certainly what we all need to do our work well. It is what will enable us to build for Christ – Wisdom. The wisdom of the word, and the wisdom which comes to us from God’s Spirit leading us and guiding us into all the truth. That will give us good success.