

**Ecclesiastes 10: 11-13; “A Serpent Charmed”, Message # 70 in the series
– “Remember Your Creator”, A Bible Study conducted on the
evening of March 21st, 2012, at the Rendall Home.**

These words of wisdom are given to us by Solomon so that we might know how to deal with fools; especially their foolish speech. The fool is a person who will try to get what they want from you, and from everyone else around them, by using their words to do it. Words, they rightly see and believe, have power. But they do not understand the implications of the things that they say; what it will do to them, or to people around them. Tonight we will see that there is no wisdom in the words of a fool. You and I need to understand that, whether we are using our words wisely or foolishly. We do not want to fit the descriptions of the fool which are given in this text in any way. There are 2 characteristics given to us of a person who is foolish in their speech. 1st Characteristic – The fool bites in his speech if he is not charmed. (verse 11) And the 2nd – The fool grows progressively worse in his speech if grace does not help him. (verses 12 and 13).

1st – The fool bites in his speech if he is not charmed.

“A serpent may bite when it is not charmed; the babbler is no different.” I cannot believe that either the NASB or the ESV has the correct translation of this passage. It says, “If the serpent bites before being charmed, there is no profit for the charmer.” This does not make sense in the context of the words of one who is a babbler, being compared to a snake which needs to be charmed. Indeed, there is no mention of the babbler in the NASB. Young’s Literal Translation says, “If the serpent bites without enchantment, then there is no advantage to a master of the tongue.” The word translated “babbling” in our NKJV can be translated as, “the master of the tongue.” It says so in the margin. It does not mean the master of the tongue in a good sense. It means someone who is capable of using his tongue to accomplish much toward establishing his own selfish thoughts and promoting his own sinful ways. This is what the first babbling Satan did in the garden of Eden in the beginning. He slithered into the garden and even though Eve told him that they were not permitted to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he still deceived her with his babbling lie that she would not die if she ate the forbidden fruit. That lie led to the bite of death by Satan. He is the serpent that can be charmed by nothing except the Word of God and power of Christ. If the snake is charmed, it hopefully will not bite you.

But a Christian should know and understand that there are many sinful people in the world who act to do the Serpent’s bidding. Ephesians 2: 1 “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience. (the fools) Even as a believer, the serpent Satan may bite you even if he is charmed in the ultimate

sense by Christ. This shows us that we must use extreme caution in dealing with this kind of foolish person who is mentioned in the text. He is not only a danger to you because he deceives by false words, he is a danger because Satan likes to work in and through such people. A babbler is a foolish person who speaks his mind too freely, and on that basis he tries to get you to do what he would selfishly or sinfully like you to do. He tries to get you to speak your mind too freely also, or at least that you would, by the force of his words, come to agree with him. And when a foolish babbler does this with a Christian it is in order that he might compromise some truth of doctrine or practice of righteousness which the Word of God commands. He will use lies or flattery, or he will criticize to try to bring you to his own selfish and sinful way of thinking. And having failed in this, he will bite you. Let's look at a few verses to confirm this. Turn with me to Psalm 58, verse 1. "Do you indeed speak righteousness, you silent ones?" "Do you judge uprightly, you sons of men?" "No, in heart you work wickedness; you weigh out the violence of your hands in the earth." "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." "Their poison is like the poison of a serpent; they are like the deaf cobra that stops its ear, which will not heed the voice of charmers, charming ever so carefully." The "silent ones" are those wicked people who are silent judges of people who are doing righteousness. In their hearts they are working out wickedness, and weighing out violence toward those who know and follow God and do and keep His righteous precepts. What is very interesting however, is that these verses trace back the source of these wicked people's spewing out of the poison of their lies, to the womb. "They go forth from the womb speaking lies. This was something that they were born with. This was something that developed in them right from the point in which they were created. Their lies and violence continued on even though there had been other people trying to tell them that what they were doing was wrong. They are referred to as "the voice of the charmers." The charmers are parents and righteous people who speak the truth of the Word of God and preach also the gospel of Jesus Christ, if I can be so bold to say so. These people of the text were like deaf cobras that stopped their ears and not heed that voice.

In our own day these verses are just as relevant as the day in which they were written. This was something that developed in these wicked persons right from the point in which they were conceived in the womb. Why were they like this? They were like this because they had inherited Adam's nature in their mother's womb when they were conceived. So when they came forth from the womb, they came forth speaking lies. Their lies and violence continued on even though there had been other people trying to tell them that what they were doing was wrong. They are referred to as "the voice of the charmers." The charmers are parents and righteous people of all ages and positions in life who speak the truth of the Word of God and preach also the gospel of Jesus Christ in our New Testament times, if I can be so bold to say so. These people of this text are like deaf cobras who have

stopped up their ears and will not heed that voice of instruction and reproof when they were told that they were like this. They resented it and they went right on to be as full of words as the wind, to establish their own ideas of life and what was supposed right for them to think, to say, and to do. How do we do the part of “charmners” toward such people.

Well, turn with me over to Proverbs 26: 4 and 5 – “Do not answer a fool according to his folly, lest he you also be like him.” “Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.” Here we see the way to answer, or not to answer a fool. Don’t answer him according to his folly. Don’t answer him out of a spirit of sinful frustration. Don’t answer him with the same spirit and words that he speaks to you. Listen to Matthew Henry – “If he boast of himself, do not answer him by boasting of thyself.” “If he rail and talk passionately, do not thou rail and talk passionately too.” “If he tell one great lie, do not thou tell another to match it. If he calumniate thy friends, do not thou calumniate his.” “If he banter, do not answer him in his own language, lest thou be like him, even thou, who knowest better things, who hast more sense, and hast been better taught.” That is very good advice. And yet the other part of the verse is just as true, and just as important. “Answer him according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes. If he sees that you are silent and that you have nothing to say against his false arguments or his sinful practices, he may just conclude that his sinful words and bad practices flow from real wisdom that resides with him, and you cannot let him think that. You must be able to defend the faith and the truth of the Word of God concerning what is righteous and unrighteous.

In our own day these verses are just as relevant as the day in which they were written. There are babblers in our day who are just as poisonous in their speech as the people who are described in this Psalm. And therefore you must so study the Bible, and so listen to good preaching, that you will have an answer for even a fool, if you can see that he will listen to Biblical reasoning. Sometimes the Lord saves fools. “For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.” (Titus 3: 3) Indeed we need to see and understand that we are all by nature, apart from the grace of Christ, those who go astray from the womb speaking lies. One of the verses that the Apostle Paul uses to show every man his depravity in Romans Chapter 3 verse 13, is when he quotes Psalm 5, verse 9. “For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is destruction; their throat is an open tomb; they flatter with their tongue.” Flattery is one of the most used tools of the babbler. But it is only one. Turn with me to Jude 16. There are other methods that the babbler uses. “These (he is speaking of false teachers) are grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.” We must beware of the flatterer. But we must also guard ourselves from being grumblers and complainers ourselves. Let us charm unbelieving babblers with our adherence to the truth of

the word of God, all the while seeking to pull them out of the fire of their own sinful making.

2ndly - The fool grows progressively worse in his speech if grace does not help him. (verses 12 and 13).

“The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious, but the lips of a fool shall swallow him up; the words of his mouth begin with foolishness, and the end of his talk is raving madness.” The truth of the matter is this. The speech of the wise man will grow by degrees better after he is converted to Christ if he is sensitive to the Spirit and is praying about how to speak. Turn over to Psalm 141, verse 3. “Set a guard over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips.” A godly person is a person who prays about the things that come out of his mouth. He doesn’t speak off the top of his head like a babbler does. He asks the Lord’s help him in this important matter. “Set a guard over my mouth; the Holy Spirit who will watch over the door of my lips and speak to my heart to tell me that I am talking too much, or not speaking the things that are right, or unto edification. The godly person knows that there is difference between the wisdom from above which is from God, and that which is demonic. Turn with me over to James Chapter 3. “My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.” “For we all stumble in many things.” “If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body.” “Indeed we put bits in horses mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body.” “Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.” “Even so the tongue is a little member and boast great things.” “See how great a forest a little fire kindles!” “And the tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.” “For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.” “But no man can tame the tongue.” “It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.” “With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God.” “Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing.” “My brethren these things ought not to be so.” There is that word “poison” again. Only the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ can take the poison out of your tongue. The poison which curses men who have been made in the image and likeness of God.

The speech of a fool shall grow progressively worse over time, if God does not intervene and give him grace to change to be a more thoughtful person. A wise man’s lips are gracious because of the grace of Christ. Turn with me to Psalm 45 and you will see the ultimate example of grace. “My heart overflows with a good theme; I recite my composition to the King; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.” “You are fairer than the sons of men; grace is poured upon Your lips; therefore God has blessed You forever.” This passage is prophetic of our Lord Jesus Christ. Grace was poured out upon His lips by the Father and the Holy

Spirit so that He could perfectly speak words of truth and wisdom. Turn over to John 7, verse 45. “Then the officers came the chief priests and Pharisees, who said to them, ‘Why have you not brought Him?’” “The officers answered, ‘No man ever spoke like this Man!’” (that was the grace that was poured out upon His lips.) “Then the Pharisees answered them, ‘Are you also deceived?’” “Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him?” “But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed.” Actually it was these men who thought and spoke these things who were fools and accursed. Their lips were swallowing them up. Psalm 14, verse 4. “Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, who eat up my people as they eat bread, and do not call on the Lord?” You see, babblers and fools start out with the foolishness of speaking in this way, and they progress to the point of raving madness. Saul did this with David. These Pharisees and rulers did it with Jesus. May it not be true of any of us. Let us see that gracious speech comes from our Lord Jesus Christ and let us pray to receive grace and speak graciously.