

Ecclesiastes 10: 14 and 15; “A Fool’s Words and Labor”, Message # 71 in the series – “Remember Your Creator”, Conducted by Pastor Paul Rendall on April 17th, 2012, at the Rendall Home.

We want to talk about the words and labors of fools this evening, but we want to do it in such a way that we also see what the believer’s responsibility is in contrast to him. It says here that the fool multiplies words and his labor wearies him, so if the converse is true, the righteous man’s words should be few and to the point, and his labor should actually invigorate him when the Spirit of God is blessing the man’s work. So this evening we will look 1st at the sinful weakness of multiplying words and how the believer can keep himself from that. 2nd – We want to look at the fool’s knowledge of the future, versus the believer’s view of it. And then 3rd – We will look at how the fool’s labors make him weaker, but how the believer’s labors actually strengthen him.

1st of all – Let’s look at the fool’s sinful weakness of multiplying words.
(verse 14)

“A fool also multiplies words.” “No man knows what is to be; who can tell him what will be after him?” These words are the continuation of Solomon’s addressing the importance of words beginning in verse 11. Last time we looked at the babbler needing to be “charmed”, needing to be spoken to in a way that will subdue his unrighteous tendency to “bite” people with his lips. The babbler may be a backbiter, or a tale-bearer, or he may use flattery towards you the believer, to try to get you to go along with what he is thinking and reasoning. But you should not go along with him. Instead you should pray to answer the fool according to his folly as we spoke about last time. The way that you answer a fool according to his folly is to instruct him concerning the use of his tongue and tell him of his need of Christ. We want to look at a few verses which will show us that the multiplying of words is a sinful weakness for anyone who engages in it. Turn with me over to Proverbs 10: 18. “Whoever hates has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool.” “In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.” “The tongue of the righteous is choice silver; the heart of the wicked is worth little.” “The lips of the righteous feed many, but fools die for lack of wisdom.” The statement is made, “Whoever hates has lying lips, and whoever spreads slander is a fool.” Telling lies is multiplying words which should not be spoken at all. Any misrepresentation of the truth, either adding to it, or taking away from it, coming from the lips of any person, believer or unbeliever, is saying too much. It is saying what should not be said about another person, and it comes from a heart that is filled with hate. Love does not misrepresent the truth about other people around you, no matter what you think, or what you know about them. Love does not go about to slander the character or reputation of others. “The lips of a wise man’s mouth are gracious,” as it says in verse 12. The heart of a wicked person, or a fool, is worth little because it cannot bring forth the words which are

like choice silver. “Choice silver” is a word picture for a person’s bringing out of their heart good words, which will be valuable for everyone to hear. But in a multitude of words sin is not lacking. That is, the foolish person does not know how to restrain his lips. He will go on and on speaking a multitude of words, expressing his own thoughts on a subject, more than he should. He thinks that he will supposedly prevail with his many words. But instead he only proves that he cannot love others, and he cannot control himself. He is proud and does not know it because he thinks that he is wise when actually he is a fool. He is enamored with his own sinful reasoning. On the other hand, the lips of a righteous person will feed many. His words will be taken in by his hearers and thought upon. The hearers will digest these words and the words will bring the right kind of knowledge, wisdom, and strength; to think rightly upon any given subject, and then to apply that knowledge to do what would be right in relation to the knowledge imparted.

Let me ask each one of us if we are thinking rightly and speaking the truth accurately about situations and people around us? Or, are our words too many; just going on and on, speaking our own mind without regard to what the truth of God’s word, the Bible, counsels us to do? If so, we will fall into transgression with our many words. Look at Proverbs 29: 11. “A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back.” In the NAS translation it says, “A fool always loses his temper, but a wise man holds it back.” The King James says, “A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.” You can see the difference can’t you? It is that everything that the fool has in his mind, he is of a mind to utter it. A righteous man, a wise man, will keep it in, and only speak of it later if it is wise to do so. Look at Proverbs 17: 27 and 28. “He who has knowledge spares his words, and a man of understanding is of a calm spirit.” “Even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace; when he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive.” When it says that a man of understanding is of a calm spirit, in the King James it says he is “of an excellent spirit”. He is of a precious spirit. (So the word is, says Matthew Henry) Henry further says, “A gracious spirit is a precious spirit, and renders a man amiable and more excellent than his neighbor.” “He is of a cool spirit (so some read it), not heated with passion, nor put into any tumult or disorder by the impetus of any corrupt affection, but even and stayed.” “A cool head with a warm heart is an admirable composition.”

Why should a man of knowledge spare his words? He should do so because, in what he says, he wants to be gracious as well as to be truthful. He wants to be kind and considerate and loving in his words whenever and wherever he can. He wants to communicate grace to those who are listening to him. Look over at Colossians 4: 6. It says, “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” When a man is wise like this in his speech, it preaches the gospel of grace to those who are hearing him. His words are gracious words; they are seasoned with salt, that precious grace of Christ that

has been shown to them by Christ, which then enables them to speak graciously and deal graciously with others. Now this does not mean that even when you are gracious in your speech that you will always see a favorable reaction to all that you say. Even our Lord and Master did not see this. Turn with me over to Luke 4: 16. “So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up. And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read.” “And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” “Then He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all who were in the synagogue were fixed on Him.” “And He began to say to them, ‘Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’” “So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth.” “And they said, ‘Is this not Joseph's son?’” “He said to them, ‘You will surely say this proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal yourself!’ Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country.’” “Then He said, “Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country.” “But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow.” “And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” “So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city; and they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw Him down over the cliff.” “Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way.”

The Lord Jesus was a man who exhibited an excellent and calm spirit when he spoke these words. He spared his words, but he didn't spare his hearers understanding his meaning, however gracious He was when He spoke them. They acknowledged that he was gracious. It says that they marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And yet they angrily reacted to his words on God's selectively blessing some and not others. This shows us that especially when we speak to others about the sovereignty of God in relation to His help or His giving the gift of salvation, that many will not like it. Jesus always spoke in the right way. We should always pray to be careful that we will not speak in the wrong way. Many words will not necessarily convince the mind of those who do not want to hear all of the word of God. In applying this to ourselves I want to quote the words of Matthew Henry once again. He says, “A wise man will be of few words, as being afraid of speaking amiss: He that has knowledge, and aims to do good with it, is careful, when he does speak to speak to the purpose, and says

little in order that he may take time to deliberate.” “He spares his words, because they are better spared than ill-spent.”

2nd – We want to look at the fool’s knowledge of the future, versus the believer’s view of it (verses 14b)

“Who can tell him what will be after him?” We have several examples of the first of these words, “Who can tell him what will be after him?” The fool often has great plans which he does not stop to ask God’s blessing upon, but he will tell everyone else about them. Turn with me over to James Chapter 4, verse 13. “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow.” “For what is your life?” “It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.” “Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that.’” “But now you boast in your arrogance.” “All such boasting is evil.” “Therefore to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.” Now this verse applies to believers as well as unbelievers. That is the context. The fool does not always know what is good for him to be doing, what is good for him to think in terms of the future. But a believer ought to be under no such misapprehensions. A believer knows, or he should know, that his life is a vapor. He knows that there are great uncertainties in his making definite plans for the future. So, he ought to go about his planning, and his talking about his plans with others, in the humble way of stating to them this way: “If the Lord wills... we will do this or that.” Let me ask you if you think this way? Do you speak this way? Or do you boast of the future and of your accomplishing all of your plans; speaking many words about them to others as if they most certainly will come to pass? This is not wise.

And then there is the fool. The fool has said in his heart: “There is no God”. And so how a rich fool thinks, and how he lives, is described for us in Luke Chapter 12, verses 16-21. “Then Jesus spoke a parable to them, saying: ‘The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.’” “And he thought within himself, saying, ‘What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?’” “So he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.’” “And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink and be merry.’” “But God said to him, ‘Fool!’” “This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?” “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” These words of this rich fool show us exactly where his priorities were. He multiplied these vain words in his own heart, but it was to no purpose that God could bless. The rich fool’s purpose was to continue to build his estate here, so that he could eat, drink, and be merry here, thinking that his true and lasting life was here. But this was real deception. There was no thought for his own soul’s salvation, let alone for his being “rich toward God.” The lesson for us here is that we should think of our true and lasting life, and our true and lasting

riches as something we have stored up with God. And if we haven't been storing them up with God, we need to begin now, before it is too late. Whatever level of material blessings that you attain to here ought to be thought of in relation to the kingdom of heaven in your heart, and how you cannot hold on to them forever. You cannot take them with you when you die. So why not hold them lightly and use them in serving the Lord Jesus. The riches that are going to last and endure to eternal life, and the spiritual riches which you will cultivate while you are here, this short time, upon the earth, have been given to you in the form of spiritual blessings. Store up for yourselves treasure in heaven where moth and rust cannot corrupt, where thieves cannot break in and steal. Repent of covetousness, greed, and earthly-mindedness. For you cannot tell what will be after you unless you believe in Jesus and live for Him.

And then 3rd - We will look at how the fool's labors make him weaker, but how the believer's labors actually strengthen him. (verse 15)

"The labor of fools wearies them, for they do not even know how to go to the city!" I think that we can be very brief here. A fool wearies himself with his labors because he doesn't like to work, and doesn't see the value of industry and diligence. He doesn't even take the time to take notice of the way into the city, where he might find profitable work if he would seek for it. The fool really has no meaning to his life except to serve his own belly; his own fleshly interests and appetites. There are even professed Christians who fall into this category. And some are going to be very disappointed that they have not learned this truth of the importance of laboring for those things which endure to eternal life. Look over at Philippians 3, verse 17. "Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern." "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: who end is destruction whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things." O what a terrible place to be in, where your god is your belly, and your glory is your shame. Rather, let us labor for Christ as we labor in our everyday work. Look at John 6: 26. Jesus knew, after he fed the 5,000 that there were some who were following him for the wrong reasons. They were following Him because their bellies were filled by His miracle. Listen to what He says, "Jesus answered them and said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled.'" "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him." "Then they said to Him, What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" "Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.'" You see that is how you find your way to the eternal City. You labor for the spiritual food which endures to eternal life; that good word of God which is bread to your soul and which shows you the meaning and the reason for your existence. The word of God points you to much fruitful

labor; even to be strengthened in and through such labors. That labor is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, to bear fruit unto God in all of your words and all of your works.