

Message #34

Ecclesiastes 10:1-3

In Ephesians 5:15-17, the Apostle Paul writes these words: “Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” Paul’s admonition is that believers should walk as one wise, not as one foolish.

The obvious presupposition is that it is possible for a believer to live life as one wise and it is also possible for a believer to live life as a fool.

In the context of Ephesians 5, one who is walking as a wise person is one who is keeping himself from immorality, impurity, greed and filthy talk (5:3-4). The wise person is one who refuses to participate in these unfruitful deeds of darkness, whereas the foolish believer just plunges right in.

As we come to this 10th chapter of Ecclesiastes, we come to a chapter that is designed to talk about and contrast the path of wisdom with the path of the fool. It is ironic that Solomon does this, for in much of this book he has walked down the path of a fool. Solomon knew the reality of what he was talking about. He knew what it was like to be the wisest man on earth—one who pleased God and one who was used mightily by God. He also knew what it was like to play the part of a fool, walking down path after path of folly that led him nowhere.

AS A BELIEVER, CHOOSE TO WALK ON THE PATH OF THE WISE AND NOT THE PATH OF THE FOOL.

Solomon will make it clear in this chapter that there are consequences for one who chooses to walk on the path of folly and there are consequences for one who chooses to walk on the path of wisdom.

Now it seems to me that **verses 1-3 of chapter 10** introduce the main subject. An opening comparison is made between one who is wise and one who is foolish.

The primary Hebrew word used for “wise” or “wisdom” is a word (Chakmah) which refers to being wise in the sense of having a crafty ability to judge what is right according to God’s perspective. The primary word used for “fool” or “foolish” is one that refers to one who projects himself to be a giant or shining constellation in an impious, foolish way. A fool is one who arrogantly projects himself to be something he is not (Gesenius, pp. 207 & 408).

According to Solomon, a fool is one who is lazy (4:5), one who is not a man of his word (5:2-6), one who will always tell you what you want to hear (7:5), and one who is shallow and laughs at shallow things (7:6). It is never God-honoring to walk on a foolish path.

OPENING POINT #1 – A little foolishness mixed into wisdom can ruin the wisdom. **10:1**

Solomon has already compared a man's reputation with a precious, fragrant ointment (7:1). The imagery behind dead flies making a perfume's oil stink is imagery of the putrefying influence that something small can really have. Notice it isn't just one fly that makes the perfume stink, it is several dead "flies" that damage it.

There will be moments of failure in every believer's life. Those moments are all instances when we do something foolish and choose to walk on the path of the fool. In such moments we may still be classified as wise if we handle things the way God wants. If, for example, we confess our sin, God is faithful and just to forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9).

What is described here are many dead flies which ruin a perfume. Now bad odors are common to most places, but not to perfume. When one thinks of perfume, one expects it to smell lovely and sweet. One expects a nice aroma flowing from perfume. So when one smells something rotten coming from something that is supposed to be beautiful, it is very upsetting. By the time perfume is ruined by dead flies, the dead flies have been in it for quite a while.

Foolishness in the life, if neglected for a long period of time, can end up more in control of a person's life than wisdom and honor. A believer is expected to develop and mature into a life that is a sweet fragrance unto God. If foolishness is allowed to fester for a lengthy period of time, it can end up ruining the fragrance and putrefying the life.

The Apostle Paul used basically the same imagery when he wrote to the carnal Corinthian church. He said it this way: "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" (I Cor. 5:6).

OPENING POINT #2 – A heart directs the wise man and the foolish man in opposite directions. **10:2**

I want us to notice that both the wise man and the foolish man are governed by their hearts. Both make heart-rooted decisions, but the direction is completely different.

Going right or left is more than just a direction choice. In Scripture, the right side was the side of blessing, the side of God's favor and protection (Ps. 16:8; 110:5; 121:5). Jesus Christ used the right concept as being those who would enter the eternal kingdom (Matt. 25:31-46). The left side was just the opposite. It represented the side of disaster, calamity and judgment (Matt. 25:31-46). Clearly the right side is the side that pleases God and the left side is the side that doesn't.

OPENING POINT #3 – The fool will demonstrate to everyone that he is a fool everywhere he walks. **10:3**

A fool cannot walk on any road without people soon realizing he lacks sense.

As one commentator said, “Even as he walks along the road, the fool shows everyone how stupid he is” (Pulpit, p. 328).

A fool is not really concerned about what the Word of God says. He is more interested in walking his own way rather than God’s way. So as the fool meanders through life, more and more people begin to realize this man or this woman has a real spiritual problem. He is very foolish!

Once one gets on a foolish path, it takes God’s grace to get him off of it. Without God’s grace there isn’t much hope or chance. Which path are we on tonight, the path of one wise or the path of the fool?