

STUDIES IN ECCLESIASTES (24)
Thoughts about Wisdom (1)
Ecclesiastes 7:11-28 (1)

Tonight, we continue our study of the book of Ecclesiastes. We have begun examining the second half of this letter where proper wisdom is an even greater focus. In our last two lessons from Ecclesiastes 7:1-10 we noted 7 or 8 things Solomon described as better, such as going to the house of mourning rather than the house of feasting, the rebuke of the wise, and how the end of a thing is better than the beginning.

In this lesson we will notice some more thoughts about wisdom as we read and study our way through this book. Concerning this section, one author (Wilson Adams, Ecclesiastes, Courageous Living Series) noted five things about wisdom in the remainder of this chapter. He noted that Wisdom: 1) Gives protection, 2) Gives perspective; 3) Gives balance; 4) Gives strength; & 5) Gives insight. We will devote 2 lessons to the observations of this section, with a little different approach.

I. Wisdom gives protection (11-12)

- a. **When applied to an inheritance** – an inheritance can be a good thing, or it can be a detriment. It depends on how wise the receiver is. Consider those who seek their inheritance with the intent of squandering it on pleasures (much like the prodigal son who demanded his inheritance – Luke 15:12-13) or act foolishly with it.
We often hear of sad stories with an inheritance – children fighting over how much they get and families torn apart over greed (recall how one came to Jesus from the crowd and asked Jesus to tell his brother to divide his inheritance – Luke 12:13; Jesus did not want to be an arbitrator in such things – He warned of covetousness and told *the Parable of the Rich Fool* – Luke 12:14-21).
Others simply do not know how to manage their new found wealth (because they have not been taught good stewardship, contentment, and wisdom in handling our resources) and so it is gone, and often times one is left in worse shape than when he/she received their inheritance in the first place.
- b. **“Profitable to those who see the sun”** is another way of saying, “while alive”. Contextually, consider that an inheritance will not prevent death, especially when managed by a fool. And even beyond that it CANNOT change the uncertainty of life – James 4:14 – it is a vapor).
- c. **Wisdom is a defense (protection) even as money is a defense**
 - i. Is this advocating the superiority of the pursuit of money? OR is it saying that money is EQUAL to wisdom?
No! The principles warning against greed (1 Timothy 6:9-10)-and trusting in uncertain riches still clearly apply – 1 Timothy 6 :17). Solomon deals with wealth throughout this book and in the Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.
 - ii. BUT having resources WITH godly wisdom CAN be a good thing. It can protect us from various problems (hence a defense). It can keep you full, warm and clothed. It can help you stay healthy. It can provide protection for you and your family (and even a nation).
It can relieve anxiety and worries about both the present and the future.
It may even afford you the opportunity to help others and make your community better.
Spiritually, it can help open doors to the gospel – supporting preaching, helping needy brethren overcome struggles, etc.
Often, the foolish are robbed of such blessings and opportunities because they have been wasteful and irresponsible with the resources they have been entrusted with? Massive debt, frivolous spending, no savings in case something comes us (an emergency fund), etc.

- iii. **Wisdom is LIKE this** – In fact, it is BETTER than riches (Proverbs 3:13-15 - *Happy is the man who finds wisdom, And the man who gains understanding; For her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, And her gain than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, And all the things you may desire cannot compare with her*).
The point is wisdom can protect you in MANY areas of life, INCLUDING your finances. AND even as finances can provide some protection.
 Wisdom protects you from so many OTHER things as well – broken relationships, dealing with others, preventing mistakes and damages, and even spiritual failures. It can help you avoid the snares of the devil (2 Timothy 2:26, 2 Corinthians 2:11)
- d. **It can give life to those who have it** - wisdom may prolong life, as one uses his inheritance, or whatever resources he manages in this life.

II. Wisdom gives perspective (13-14)

- a. **“Consider”** – a word that means to contemplate or mediate upon something (cf. Philippians 4:8 – meditate – or think – on these things).
 The wise man considers many things (Proverbs 14:15, *The simple believes every word, But the prudent considers well his steps*; cf. Proverbs 6:6 – *Go to the ant... consider her ways and be wise*). And he does so with an open mind and an honest heart. He GENUINELY wants to know the truth about what he is considering.
- b. **Consider the work of God** – the wise man will realize who God really is and how He is in control. He will not seek ways around God’s will.
 - i. **He knows God is there!** (Cf. Psalm 8:3-4 – as David consider the heavens, the work of God’s hands and knows his place before God).
He knows that what God has made crooked, he cannot straighten, and vice-versa (cf. Ecclesiastes 1:15); He knows that he may not fully understand the working of God (Eccl. 3:11).
 - ii. **But he fully realizes that He is in control** – Job 12:13-15, in the midst of an answer from Job where he acknowledges the greatness of God (as we also find throughout the book of Job): *“With Him are wisdom and strength, He has counsel and understanding. If He breaks a thing down, it cannot be rebuilt; If He imprisons a man, there can be no release. If He withholds the waters, they dry up; If He sends them out, they overwhelm the earth.”*
 Proverbs 19:20-21, *Listen to counsel and receive instruction, That you may be wise in your latter days. There are many plans in a man’s heart, Nevertheless the Lord’s counsel—that will stand.*
 (cf. Romans 8:28, 31; 1 John 4:4, etc.)
 - iii. **How often does man set out to overthrow God’s will?**
 The Bible is filled with examples of man trying to outthink God, only to be confused and overcome. - Consider the tower of Babel – Genesis 11:1-9 – God confounded their language.
 - Consider King Ahab (married to Jezebel, and very wicked) who is warned by Micaiah (1 Kings 22:15-40) if he goes to battle he will die. Rather than listening to God, Ahab has the prophet arrested with instructions to afflict him until the king returned (as if you can blackmail God). Then he tried to disguise himself in battle. But a random arrow struck the king between the joints of his armor and he died that day (34ff).
 - iv. And even if man thinks he can survive without God, things like natural disasters and VIRUSES remind him who is really in control, and more specifically, who is NOT in control.
- c. **Consider Him whether in prosperity or adversity** – God has appointed both. He makes His sun shine on both the good and the evil (Matthew 5:45).
 - i. **In prosperity be joyful** – when we are blessed, let us be sure that we thank God and are humble.

- ii. ***In adversity – consider.*** But also, don't forget Him in the bad times. Continue to be grateful. Remember previously in this chapter – its better to go to a funeral... Why? The wise take it to heart.
 - iii. Paul, while in prison penned the encouraging and joyful letter of Philippians.
 - iv. Job 2:10, after losing everything, Job's wife tells him to curse God and die. *But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.*
- d. ***God has appointed both of these*** – whether we like it or not, or understand it, we need both good and bad times to give us proper perspective. If all was good times, would we really remember God and be grateful for such? Would we really LEARN and become better?
- And there are many answers that time will not permit us to examine right now, such as:
- i. Realizing He DOES know the future and details that we cannot factor in until things have run their course (cf. Isaiah 46:9-11); and
 - ii. Good can come from tribulations (Romans 5:3-5); and
 - iii. There is coming a day of judgment when all will give an account – He will take vengeance (Romans 12:19, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, etc.).
- e. ***Can man know what will come after or in the future?*** Other than what God has revealed to us, can we really predict exactly what is going to happen?
- This is why we must be careful before we start blaming or questioning God. He does know what is best.

In our next lesson, we will continue to notice some more observations from this text as seek to put this life into its proper perspective. Until then, let each of us strive to be all that God would have us to be. Where is your wisdom leading you? Think about it!

STUDIES IN ECCLESIASTES (25)
Thoughts about Wisdom (2)
Ecclesiastes 7:11-28 (2)

Tonight, we continue our study of the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon's pursuit for the meaning of life. Last week we began studying a particular section which addresses some qualities associated with wisdom. This is a portion of this book that looks like a set of proverbs, but many of these are linked together. Concerning this particular text, one author (Wilson Adams, Ecclesiastes, Courageous Living Series) noted five things about wisdom: 1) It Gives protection, 2) It Gives perspective; 3) It Gives balance; 4) It Gives strength; & 5) It Gives insight.

Last week we examined the first 2 of these noting how wisdom can be a defense much in the same way that money WISELY used can provide protection. We included a discussion about inheritance (wise and foolish); Then we noted that wisdom can give you perspective – that is, it can help you appreciate God by considering Him, in both prosperity and adversity. Tonight, we continue our examination of this section by noting the next points.

I. Wisdom gives balance (15-18)

- a. The inequity of life – ***sometimes the just suffer and the evil prosper***. This is the age-old question we struggle with as we consider God and ourselves. It causes many to reject God.

BUT with such, remember as we have already noted, that God is in control and knows what is happening. There will be an accounting!

- b. ***Do not be overly righteous*** – a challenging statement. Is it really possible to be too righteous where God is concerned? When we consider God's definition and demands – certainly not. The righteous man is the one who DOES all that he is commanded. We have addressed this in Mathew 5:20 where Jesus demanded a righteousness that exceeds that of the corrupt leaders. We have also addressed the pursuit of holiness. Can you really be too holy?

To be overly righteous could be – self-righteousness – arrogance as we find with the scribes and Pharisees who looked down upon others (cf. Luke 18:9-14).

Or it could be ***one whose demands are so exact that he leaves no room for those who differ*** with him to be righteous. He binds where God has not bound and believes his way is the ONLY way (in areas where God's word does give leeway). NOTE: This is not a criticism of those demanding authority for all that we do (cf. Ephesians 5:11).

Or it could be ***one whose righteous pursuits cloud his wisdom concerning life***. For example: One who contributes to a godly cause to the neglect of his family and other responsibilities.

Or perhaps ***one who totally isolates himself from the world***, and as a result he removes opportunities to teach and influence others.

The point is we need to be useful to God, not only to save ourselves, but also strive to win others.

I once heard someone say that "Some people are so heavenly minded they are no earthly good." The point being we put ourselves in a situation where we cannot be light or salt (proper examples – Matthew 5:13-16) to others. Just as it is possible for too much salt to spoil a meal, and too much light to make it useful (blinding), so we must weigh our actions so that we will be EFFECTIVE both in strengthening our lives as Christians and winning others to Him!

- c. ***Do not be overly wise*** – again, we wonder how such is possible. Can you really be too wise? There is ***worldly wisdom that seeks to explain away God*** – which is what so many do today. Far too many have no place for faith where God is concerned.

There is one who is wise ***who becomes arrogant with his understanding***. One who thinks he knows it all (cf. Romans 2:18-21).

He could ***set a standard of wisdom for himself that is so high*** it is impossible to achieve. How many

won't do anything because "I don't know enough yet"? HOW LONG is that excuse acceptable?
Solomon's wisdom was greater than all others, AND a gift from God – but look where he ended up. He let his wives turn him away from God and in the end, he lost so much.

- d. **Do not be overly wicked** – following our text, this is NOT saying that its ok to be a little wicked. The truth is, we ALL fall short from time to time (Romans 3:23). We are going to sin and we need to deal with those sins (1 John 1:8-10, 2:1-2)
BUT, we know there are so many who are outright evil and wicked in their behavior and thoughts. They are destroyers and have no intent of repenting.
Do **NOT use that as an excuse to give up or continue in sinful practices**, or to say, "I can't help it". There are some brethren now who are advocating that we HAVE TO sin every day.
Furthermore, **do not view yourself worse than you really are** – some people see themselves as so worthless they give up on themselves and believe they are irredeemable. As LONG as we have breath, we will NEVER reach that point. The question is if we are willing to do something about it.
- e. **Do not be foolish** – in context, this is the only phrase of these 4 that doesn't use the word "overly". And that might be because you are either foolish or you are not. There is no middle ground.
The fool is the one devoid of sense – he acts carelessly and without thought – whether a single act or a way of life. He goes to extremes to his own hurt. He might even put his own life in danger: "Why should you die before your time?" (17) or "Why should you destroy yourself?" (16)
We have addressed the fool throughout this letter and will continue to do so as we contrast wise and foolish living.
- f. **Consider ALL of these** (18) – Solomon concludes this observation by noting that it is good to grasp balance in our lives. Do NOT ignore any of these things.
It is he who fears God that will escape them all – he will be humble and content as he seeks to be righteous and he will act with wisdom in all the decisions he makes. He will abstain from every form of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:22) and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Ephesians 5:11); but realizing who he is, when he DOES stumble, he repents and seeks to repair whatever has happened. He is NOT foolish in his dealing with this life AND as he prepares to stand before God. It is that simple!

II. Wisdom gives strength (19-22)

- a. **Wisdom strengthens the wise more than ten rulers of the city** – force can only get you so far. You may have a superior army or strength over others, but a wise man can answer, and perhaps even overcome their strength.
Proverbs 21:22, *A wise man scales the city of the mighty, And brings down the trusted stronghold.*
We also know that there are many who are powerful who are evil and careless in the decisions they make. In time, their empires will fall. We have seen it over and over – godless leaders who never really cared for their people and were either toppled, or their fall was not grieved.
There are things wisdom can accomplish that strength simply cannot. Examples will be found in the coming chapters of Ecclesiastes (e.g. 8:2-6, 9:13-16, etc.)
Spiritually this is especially true – all the military might or wealth or power in the world will NOT save you when you stand before God to give an accounting (Romans 14:10-12 – we will each give an account of ourselves to God).
NOR can it resolve the moral lapse that is so prevalent even today. Only TRUE wisdom that fears God will lead to a more decent society.
- b. **There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin** – this is a Biblical teaching we must always remember. Romans 3:10-11ff, 23 tells us we are all sinners and thus we fall short of the glory of God. The one who thinks he is perfect BETTER consider 1 John 1:8 – 10 again.
In CONTEXT, the point here is we all have flaws and weaknesses. The wise man will humbly acknowledge his and seek to improve to the best of his ability.

The fool, on the other hand keeps on his reckless path and has no desire to change or even hear that he needs to change.

Proverbs 15:12, *A scoffer does not love one who corrects him, Nor will he go to the wise.*

Proverbs 20:9 - *Who can say, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin"?*

Ecclesiastes 4:13 also, *Better a poor and wise youth Than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more.*

- c. ***Do not take to heart everything people say*** – This verse is SO timely today. I am convinced that ONE OF THE PROBLEMS at the root of our division as a country is our unwillingness to openly and honestly talk about our differences and disagreements. Pick the issue (homosexuality, racism, government spending, covid-19, etc. – **NOTE: I'm not discussing here who is right and who is wrong, but the attitude we have – TT**), and both sides have dug in so deeply that they won't even CONSIDER what those disagree with them have to say. They have divined themselves (act as if their word is from God) to be SO RIGHT that if you disagree with them they will label you as evil and insert whatever mean and hateful description they come up with. They will treat you with hatred and contempt and do whatever they want to do to you and think they are justified. They will try to bully, guilt and blackmail you into submission.

When people are afraid to openly express their concerns for fear of being labeled or attacked, we will NEVER find the whole truth on a given subject.

FRIENDS, as long as this mentality exists we will continue to disintegrate as a nation and within our communities.

Spiritually, I fear that at times, brethren do not act any better. I have seen some VERY UGLY behavior on social media between so-called brethren that does not honor Christ in any way. This attitude is SINFUL on so many levels and it MUST be repented of or people may lose their souls because of it!

Proverbs 18:17 says, *The first one to plead his cause seems right, Until his neighbor comes and examines him.* OH, if only we would allow this examination!

- d. ***Lest you hear your servant cursing you*** – this is the point.
ARE we LOOKING for fault in what another says or are we willing to give the benefit of the doubt? Do we automatically assume the worst in what someone says? Is it possible that we misunderstood them? Is there ANY validity to what they say (even if it is uncomfortable)? 1 Corinthians 13:5-7 in describing Christian love notes that we are to "think no evil" and we are to "bear all things, believe all things, hope all things, and endure all things." That means we give the benefit of the doubt! We assume the best until proven otherwise. It ALSO mean we are willing to ENDURE some perceived injustice if it means bringing glory to God. Solomon was saying, "Maybe he didn't mean it the way you heard it" OR "Are you looking to find fault in what he said – in word, action and motive?"
- e. ***In times past, often, you even you have cursed others*** –
Let's be honest about this – is there ANYONE who has NOT said something about someone else that they regretted? Anyone who has not uttered words or even name calling in anger? Anyone who said something in times past that they THOUGHT was ok, but now they know better and have changed their thoughts about that? Or maybe they have said something in confidence in LIMITED company that should not have been said? (And hopefully they regretted it) OR maybe they have said something that was MISUNDERSTOOD by those they were speaking to - they didn't mean to "curse" anyone, but it was perceived that way –

either innocently or hyper-critically? Etc.

James 3:2 warns us that we ALL stumble in many things – especially in our words. He proceeds to warn about how poisonous words can be!

Jesus in Matthew 7:1-5 warned about the way we judge others, including their words.

Matthew 7:12 is the golden rule – do we apply that in our judgment of what others say?

James 1:19 tells us let EVERY MAN be swift to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. Oh how we need to apply this.

And thus, we see some of Solomon expositions about wisdom. May we desire to be both righteous and wise as God desires of us, and not what we want or the path that this world thinks we should be on. Next week, we will conclude our study of this section. So where is your wisdom leading you? Think about it.