

Sunday, February 14, 2021 pm

STUDIES IN ECCLESIASTES (33)

Life – Part 2

Ecclesiastes 10:11-20

Tonight, we continue our journey through the book of Ecclesiastes – Solomon’s quest to find the real meaning of life. The latter part of this letter, as we have seen deals with living life wisely and how that is better than foolish living. In our last lesson we noted a number of proverbial observations about life. In this lesson, we will continue to notice a few more of these miscellaneous sayings, as we begin to approach the conclusion of this book. One source tied these together describing them as the revealings of a fool. In other words, we can spot one who is a fool (devoid of understanding) with these types of behaviors.

I. Concerning our words (11-14)

- a. We know the Bible continually warns us about our speech. James 1:19, 3:1-12 That is no different in this text. What you say and when you say it reveals much about who you really are. Some examples:
- b. **Serpents and babblers** -
Texts note that a serpent may bite when it is not charmed – uncontrolled, you do not want to be around a cobra.
The NKJV (KJV) compare this to a babbler (literally, a word associated with language or the tongue – used ~117 times in OT). The NASB, ESV speaks of there being no profit for the charmer.
In case of the latter (NASB), the point is if a serpent bites the audience, he will lose money.
The NKJV simply ties it to one with a loose tongue.
BOTH reach the same conclusion – you better control whatever you are working with, ESPECIALLY your tongue (see next few verses). Consider the tongue that is out of control (cf. James 3:6-8 warns about how deadly a tongue can be – including “full of deadly poison”).
- c. **Gracious words of the wise** – one who is wise controls his tongue and chooses his words carefully.
They are gracious or seeking favor (think of true compliments, finding the best, encouragement, seeking to resolve conflict, yielding, etc.) These are the types of qualities we need more of.
- d. **BUT, the lips of fools swallow him up** – most sources I read speak of self-destruction. A fool often speaks without weighing the consequences of what he says. So you find insults, lies, bragging, revealing too much, etc. One who cannot control his tongue cannot be trusted at any time.
Such is found frequently in Solomon’s proverbs – Proverbs. 10:8, 14, 21, etc.
Vs. 13 notes that he keeps going - his words begin with his foolishness and keep getting worse. We see this far too often today.
- e. **Multiplied words** (14) – he also multiplies words. And no one can count on him. You cannot tell when to believe him or not.
Consider the following: Ecclesiastes 5:3 – a fool’s voice is known by his many words. Proverbs 10:19 – in the multitude of words, sin is not lacking; James 1:19 – be swift to hear, slow to speak...

II. The labor of a fool (15)

- a. This is admitted as a difficult verse because it can be interpreted in so many different ways. I believe in considering this verse, we need to realize Solomon is addressing a fool, so productive work seems illogical (cf. vs. 18).
But consider, IN context, perhaps this is a continuation of the previous verse about the multitude of words. Have you ever heard the expression, “all talk, and no action”? There are some who all they do is talk. In fact, they wear themselves out talking and bragging about what they have done (but not really) and what they intend to do.

OR they talk so much nonsense, that they are absolutely ridiculous. And the way they present their case shows their ignorance.

As an illustration, "**they are so ignorant, they cannot find their way to a city that is right in front of them, even their own city**".

- b. The point here would be someone who talks a lot but you cannot count on him for anything. This is contrasted with the wise and godly. Recall how Jesus challenged us to let your word be your bond (Matthew 5:37). Psalm 15:4 speaking of one who may dwell in the presence of God he "swears to his own hurt and does not change" – i.e., he does what he says, and his words are worthy of consideration.

Also the wise consider his path and knows where he is going – Proverbs 4:11-12 - *I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, And when you run, you will not stumble.*

III. **Who is your ruler? (16-17)**

- a. Solomon again addresses rulers. We have seen this a recurring theme in this book. And it is easy to understand way considering that Solomon was a wise leader, and later a failed leader. He had done and seen so many things.
- b. **Woe is the land whose king is a child** – it is not the fact of youth per se (we read about 2 very young kings – Azariah was 16 years old and Josiah was 8 years old – both were good kings. Now obviously they were influenced, which is the point.

Generally, youth seem to be wilder and more likely to do wrong things and make wrong decisions – either because of their inexperience, their arrogance (a child with that type of power), or their immaturity (wanting to do what they want because they can). Note how 16b mentions **their princes feast in the morning** – rather than working (one source noted that mornings were the time to dispense justice), they spend all day having fun and being careless.

And the result is nothing gets done, and if it lasts long enough it leaves the city or nation vulnerable.

- c. **Blessed is the land whose king is the son of nobles** – this is simply addressing the opposite. This is a nation that is led by a wise and humble king. He is genuinely concerning about his people and always acts in their best interest.

His nobles know when to "feast" and when to work. And even in "feasting" they exercise discretion. They see is recreating the body, and wildly giving into lustful passions.

You might say, this is a king who surrounds himself with wise people that will help him lead wisely.

IV. **Concerning laziness (18)**

- a. We are still talking about the fool. And here we have another description of the behavior of laziness or sloth.

Here we find the building decays, and because of idleness the house leaks. He is not willing to do the work he needs to maintain his home.

The point: Almost always, the appearance of his house outwardly is an indication of his inward character. A well-kept home and yard likely reveals a well kept and organized family inside.

- b. THERE is also something to be said about neglecting something that needs to be taken care of. If you let it go, it will likely get worse. That applies to leaks in roofs and it applies to "leaks" in our lives. If we are not shoring up our faith, in time it will fail.

We also find this in Proverbs continually – Proverbs 24:30-34 describing the field of a lazy man AND its results; Proverbs 21:25, *The desire of the lazy man kills him, For his hands refuse to labor.*

- c. We need to guard against sloth both physically and spiritually. God wants us to be busy! consider also Proverbs 10:4, *He who has a slack hand becomes poor, But the hand of the diligent makes rich.*

V. **Money, the answer to everything? (19)**

- a. Another challenging verse. Why? Because we know that money is NOT the answer to everything (cf. 1 Timothy 6:9-10, 17)

- b. Solomon's point here could simply be that we must realize that while there is a time for feasting and merry making, realize that there is also a cost.
The fool thinks that money is the answer to everything – even money he doesn't have – so he borrows (Proverbs 22:7, *The rich rules over the poor, And the borrower is servant to the lender.*)
But the fool soon finds out that money cannot buy everything, especially the things are most important!
- c. BUT, even the wise realize that we need money and resources to accomplish what is needed. It is a worthy observation. But for Christians, we need the proper perspective about money and wealth and things. As noted this morning: Where is your treasure? Matthew 6:19-21
AND tying this to the previous verse – where will you get your money to buy what you need? Will you work as you ought to?

VI. Do not curse your leaders (20)

- a. Finally, a warning – ***do not curse your leaders, even in your thoughts.*** I want to notice here that Solomon does not distinguish the type of leader. He has addressed how we are to honor our leaders. And that still applies. We need to remind ourselves of 1 Peter 2:13-17 which calls for us to honor the king and submit to his ordinances.
We may be bitter toward our leaders, and even with cause – especially if they are wicked. But we need to check our attitudes, even in this. Trust God and let Him take care of it. As for you – consider 1 Timothy 2:1-3 – we are to pray for them. And even if they are our enemies, Matthew 5:43-45 still applies – we are to love and pray for them.
Or the rich, even in your bedroom – consider this in the exact same way as leaders. And it may be your wealthy boss who is not the paragon of virtue. But you still respect him and pray for him. You do your best, and let God take care of the rest.
- b. Why? You never know if the matter will get out.
 - i. ***For a bird of the air may carry your voice and tell the matter.***
 - ii. Bitterness has a way of getting out. And the stronger the bitterness, the more likely a “slip up” will happen. And when you confide in others, there is always the chance that it will be revealed – either intentionally or unintentionally.
Have you heard of people losing their jobs, OR not being hired because of their Facebook profile and posts? It happens!
 - iii. We are told – Ephesians 4:31 – *to let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking be put away from us, with all malice.*
 - iv. Bitterness, even toward corrupt leadership, hardly ever leads anywhere productive.

And thus we find more words of wisdom from this book. It is my hope that we can see that in our pursuit for the true meaning of why we are here, that the more we search, the more it needs to govern how we live our lives for good. I believe that is one of the points of this book. May we reach the conclusion we have been alluding to all along – Ecclesiastes 12:13-14. What about you? How is God governing your life? Think about it!