



“Dead Flies and Other Foolishness”

Eccl. 10:1-10

August 9, 2020

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- 2 A wise man's heart directs him toward the right, but the foolish man's heart directs him toward the left.
- 3 Even when the fool walks along the road, his sense is lacking and he demonstrates to everyone that he is a fool.
- 4 If the ruler's temper rises against you, do not abandon your position, because composure always great offenses.
- 5 There is an evil I have seen under the sun, like an error which goes forth from the ruler —
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- 7 I have seen slaves riding on horses and princes walking like slaves on the land.
- 8 He who digs a pit may fall into it, and a serpent may bite him who breaks through a wall.
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10 characteristics of the fool of scripture:

1. The fool will eventually face destruction(Prov 10:14, 21).
2. Fools have a rebellious attitude (Prov 10:8).
3. Fools refuse instruction or discipline (Prov 15:5; 16:22; 17:10).
4. They recklessly get themselves into trouble (Prov 14:16; 18:6).
5. They are arrogant (Prov 12:15)
6. They are untrustworthy (Prov 26:6).
7. Fools speak impulsively and argumentatively (Prov 20:3; 29:9, 11).
8. The fool prefers evil (Prov 10:23; 13:19) & rejects God (Ps 14:1).
9. The fool rejects repentance (Prov 14:12), choosing instead to repeat his folly (Prov 26:11; 27:22).
10. Fools desire to bring others down to their level (Prov 26:4) and therefore should be avoided (Prov 13:20; 14:7).

- **Wisdom:** skill in living. Wisdom affects how you live your life, how you do things, how you spend your money, how you spend your time, what to expect out of life, how to deal with people, your job, your marriage, etc.

- The opposite of wisdom is foolishness. In Solomon's three books (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon), he uses the words “fool, fools, foolish, and folly” a staggering total of 128 times.

1 Dead flies make a perfumer's oil stink, so a little foolishness is weightier than wisdom and honor.

“perfumer's” – פַּרְוֹ - raqach – one who prepares spices.

Eccl 7:1

A good name is better than a good fragrant oil,

Fragrant oil was carefully made by blending costly spices, and was used for many different purposes . . .

- with it priests and kings were anointed when they inaugurated into their offices.
- guests at the tables of the rich were treated to it as a luxury.
- it was used medicinally for outward application to the bodies of the sick.
- with it, corpses and the clothes in which they were wrapped were sprinkled with oil , before burial.
- Very great care was needed in the preparation and preservation of the material used for such special purposes.

Luke 23:55-56

55 Now the women who had come with Him out of Galilee followed, and saw the tomb and how His body was laid.
56 Then they returned and prepared spices and perfumes.

Matt 26:6-13

- 6 Now when Jesus was in Bethany, at the home of Simon the leper,
7 a woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it on His head as He reclined at the table.
8 But the disciples were indignant when they saw this, and said, "Why this waste?"
9 "For this perfume might have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor."
10 But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you bother the woman? For she has done a good deed to Me.
11 "For you always have the poor with you; but you do not always have Me.
12 "For when she poured this perfume on My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial.
13 "Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her."

What are the dead flies that need to be taken out of your life?

Dead fly of pride?

Dead fly of jealousy?

Dead fly of uncontrolled anger?

Dead fly of a negative attitude?

Dead fly of lust?

Dead fly of drunkenness?

Dead fly of gossip?

Dead fly of hate?

Dead fly of undisciplined life?

Don't let the "stench" of your sin destroy the valuable testimony of your life.

- A little folly in a wise man is far more visible than a little wisdom in a fool.
- Ketchup on a white shirt is highly visible.
- The dead flies make the perfume stink.
- Think about it - Why not the other way around?
- Why doesn't all that perfume make the fly smell good?
- Why can one sick person in a room of well people make them all sick?
- Why doesn't the sick person "catch" wellness from everyone else in the room?
- When a clean man touches that which is unclean, he becomes unclean
 - a. God says the sacrifices don't make the people clean, instead the people defile the sacrifices (Haggai 2:11-14)
 - b. Paul said a little leaven or a bad apple spoils the whole(1 Cor 5:6)
 - c. Uzzah grabbed the Ark to steady it— Why didn't the holy Ark make Uzzah holy?
- Answer: Because life doesn't work that way. Something very small can ruin something very great. I sin ruined the entire human race.

So Solomon is saying here -

"an ounce of folly can destroy a ton of wisdom"

"it takes far less to ruin something than to create it"

"it is easier to make a stink than to create sweetness"

"wisdom is acquired at great expense . . . but foolishness comes easy."

Bottom line: Foolishness stinks.

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Prov 3:16

16 Long life is in her right hand;
In her left hand are riches and honor.

Judges 20:14-16

14 The sons of Benjamin gathered from the cities to Gibeah, to go out to battle against the sons of Israel.

15 From the cities on that day the sons of Benjamin were numbered, 26,000 men who draw the sword, besides the inhabitants of Gibeah who were numbered, 700 choice men.

16 Out of all these people 700 choice men were left-handed; each one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss.

- The right hand to the Jews is “the place of protection.”

Ps 110:5

5 The Lord is at Your right hand;
He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath.

- The left hand was known as the place of danger.
- So when Solomon says the foolish man’s heart is in his left hand, it means that he is in danger of being led astray. He lacks wisdom that would give him protection. He is vulnerable.
- **“A wise man’s heart directs him . . .”** Our heart is the center of our life that governs the issues of life.
- Sinfulness is the natural inclination of people unless God has changed their hearts and lives and turned them to the right.

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- We can identify a fool by his “walk”, meaning the direction or the pursuits of his life.
- The inclination of our heart shows up in the demonstration of our life.

Prov 12:23

23 A prudent man conceals knowledge,
But the heart of fools proclaims folly.

Prov 18:2

2 A fool does not delight in understanding,
But only in revealing his own mind.

“It is much better to keep silent and let everybody think you are a fool, than to open your mouth and remove all doubt!”

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- Here is the picture of a hotheaded ruler. He is one easily angered who has no control over moods or temperament.
- Personal level: So when your boss gets angry at you what do you do?
- The fool storms out, slams the door, seeks revenge.
- Wisdom says: Let it go. Calm down. Take a deep breath. Don’t quit. Allow God to develop within you a gentle, quiet spirit. Never let another person’s actions determine your reaction. That’s wisdom.

Eph 4:26-27

26 BE ANGRY, AND yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

27 and do not give the devil an opportunity.

- “allays” - פָּצַח - yaw-nak – to pacify.
- Staying composed will turn away the anger of the ruler.
- Prov 15:1**
- 5 A gentle answer turns away wrath,
But a harsh word stirs up anger.

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- “evil” - רָע - rah – wickedness, disaster, misfortune, improper, unjust.
- Now Solomon is going to describe an error by one in authority that is going to turn into a disaster.

6 folly is set in many exalted places while rich men sit in humble places. 7 I have seen slaves riding on horses and princes walking like slaves on the land.

- “rich” - those who work hard or are successful through wisdom often lose their positions to less competent and qualified people. These are accomplished and able people who had proved their abilities by gaining riches (rich in talent; rich in drive; rich in energy) for themselves and are now relegated to insignificant positions
- So fools get promoted while the wise get forgotten.
- Why? 1. To favor a friend. 2. To favor a relative (nepotism). 3. Incompetence.
- The wise should have gotten the promotion, but instead the fool got the promotion.
- An administrative blunder results in placing exceedingly inept people in positions of high responsibility and power.
- So we end up wrong people in wrong positions.
- **Example: King Artaxerxes – Haman**
- In the cultural environment of ancient Israel, the common citizen did not own a horse. Royalty, nobility, and the military used horses for transport.
- Here you have slaves (the lowest) riding horses, and princes (the highest) walking.
- This creates a chaotic society (“places”). It's all upside down because of his decisions. A government that rewards the lowly (fools) and punishes the productive is an unbiblical society.

8 He who digs a pit may fall into it, and a serpent may bite him who breaks through a wall.

- Solomon illustrates more foolishness with 4 normal day to day activities - digging a pit, tearing down a wall, breaking rocks, and splitting wood.
- Illustration #1:** Digging a pit.
- Someone digs a pit. Is not careful. Maybe gets too close to the edge, slips and falls in. Foolish mistake. Maybe injures himself or dies.
 - Maybe he is fulfilling Gal 6:7 “for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.”
- 3 OT examples.
- Ps 37:14-15**
- 14 The wicked have drawn the sword and bent their bow
To cast down the afflicted and the needy,
To slay those who are upright in conduct.
15 Their sword will enter their own heart,
And their bows will be broken.

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Illustration #2: Tearing down a wall.

- Someone is tearing down a wall. Not careful. Foolishly puts his hand into the wall. A snake hiding in the wall bites him. Maybe he survives, maybe he doesn't.

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Illustration #3: Breaking rocks.

- Someone is working at a quarry. He breaks rocks. Rocks are heavy. Foolishly he removes or disturbs the wrong stone, (at a quarry the rocks are shifting all the time. You don't want a boulder coming down on you), or a large stone rolls on a foot or leg, or hand. He is severely hurt, maybe for life.

Illustration #4: splitting wood.

- Someone is splitting wood. Foolishly, he does not sharpen his axe. Has to swing axe with much force. Gets tired, miscalculates, injures himself.

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- The fool will continue to use a **dull** axe, instead of being wise and sharpening the edge.
- The fool doesn't wisely consider: 1. The waste of his energy. 2. the waste of his time.
- 'work smarter, not harder'.
- "Sharpen your knife before carving the turkey."
- **Read the manual first – saves time and energy.**
- **Ask for directions – saves time and energy.**
- Solomon is saying, "No matter what labor one pursues (digging a pit, demolishing a wall, quarrying stone, or splitting logs), the application of wisdom brings safety and success to the endeavor."

"A moment of foolishness can result in a lifetime of regret."