**Ecclesiastes**

**Chapter 10**

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**Ecc 10:1-3**

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

It is certainly obvious that dead flies that get into a precious ointment spoil it so that it is worthless. A good name can easily be ruined by a single act of foolishness that overshadows the wisdom and honor of a person. Consider the affair with Bathsheba and Uriah that caused a great slur on the character of David who had been famous for wisdom and honor. Also the idolatry of Solomon, the wisest of men, brought about his fall from grace. There was also the affinity with Ahab by Jehoshaphat, the good king, which ruined his reputation. Also Josiah went to war with the king of Egypt contrary to the word of the Lord. One of the names of Satan is Beelzebub, the lord of a fly, who solicits people to sin and produces the effect considered here.

The right and left do not refer to our current usage of the terms! The people at this time considered the person cursed who used his left hand dominantly. The ancients used to call things wise and prudent the right hand and thigs foolish the left hand. The right hand use signified that the wise man is ready to direct and assist him as he performs is duties without selfish views but inclines him to seek things above at the right hand of God in honor and glory to God. Saying that a foolish man’s heart directs him to the left means that he is at a loss for wisdom and understanding to direct him so he will act in an awkward manner as left handed people were thought to do. The fool will walk along the highway showing to all that he is a fool by his actions:

* Pro 6:12-14 *A worthless person, a wicked man, Is the one who walks with a perverse mouth, (13) Who winks with his eyes, who signals with his feet, Who points with his fingers; (14) Who with perversity in his heart continually devises evil, Who spreads strife.*
* Isa 35:8 *A highway will be there, a roadway, And it will be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean will not travel on it, But it will be for him who walks that way, And fools will not wander on it.*

**Ecc 10:4-7**

*If the ruler's temper rises against you, do not abandon your position, because composure allays great offenses. (5) There is an evil I have seen under the sun, like an error which goes forth from the ruler-- (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.*

One should be in obedience to the ruler and if his temper brings charges against you, you should not quit being in service to him and go into disloyalty and rebellion. You should bear his anger patiently and submit to his displeasure quietly for in time the anger will pass and the ruler may find out that there actually was no offence committed or maybe not something done that deserves such anger. Solomon had seen some evils done under the sun that certainly would not be done in heaven, above the sun. Such an evil may have been something from the ruler of a nation who brought undue honor on someone because the person gave presents to the ruler to obtain the honor. Foolish and wicked people are seen to sit in exalted places such as the seat of a ruler while men rich in wisdom and knowledge sit in low places without influence on the society. Rulers should be as described in:

Exo 18:21 *"Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens.*

He goes on to describe how order is reversed in the world when he sees slaves riding horses intended for princes who were walking like slaves. Horses were scarce in Judea and were meant to be ridden only by affluent people. Servants riding on the horses indicated they were being advanced upon the ruin of their masters. Such a state happened to David when his son rebelled against him and he was forced to flee on foot: 2Sam 15:30 *And David went up the ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went, and his head was covered and he walked barefoot. Then all the people who were with him each covered his head and went up weeping as they went.*

**Ecc 10:8-9**

*He who digs a pit may fall into it, and a serpent may bite him who breaks through a wall. (9) He who quarries stones may be hurt by them, and he who splits logs may be endangered by them.*

People would dig a pit to trap there enemies but as time goes by they may forget where it was and fall into it themselves.

Psa 7:15-16 *He has dug a pit and hollowed it out, And has fallen into the hole which he made. (16) His mischief will return upon his own head, And his violence will descend upon his own pate.*

The “pit” may be something other than a hole in the ground as it may be some other device devised to trap someone that may turn out to be a trap for the person who first planned it. The wall may be a hedge that God has placed around someone or some kingdom and if someone breaks through it he may suffer severe consequences. Someone who quarries stones must be careful to have planned how to take it to where it is needed. If the plan was not carefully made then the person could be hurt severely when attempting to move it. The “stones” could also be the constitutions of a community that someone tries to modify without carefully planning for any consequences of the change and then be hurt by the change. Splitting logs could refer to making divisions in families or churches by false teaching:

Rom 16:17-18 *Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. (18) For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.*

**Ecc 10:10-14**

*If the axe is dull and he does not sharpen its edge, then he must exert more strength. Wisdom has the advantage of giving success. (11) If the serpent bites before being charmed, there is no profit for the charmer. (12) Words from the mouth of a wise man are gracious, while the lips of a fool consume him; (13) the beginning of his talking is folly and the end of it is wicked madness. (14) Yet the fool multiplies words. No man knows what will happen, and who can tell him what will come after him?*

This proverb also applies to making careful plans before execution of a task. If the axe is not properly prepared then certainly it takes more strength to apply it to the task. Similarly if one does not plan properly in any task it will take a lot more effort to execute the task. The excellency of wisdom is that it makes the person take the proper approach to solving any problem. The charmer prepares the snake so that it is soothed and not fearing an attack that would make it strike. But if it strikes before being charmed the charmer has not done his task properly. Similarly a person should prepare others before presenting his plan or else he may be “bitten” by the opposition. I think verse 12 applies well today for email and tweeting as a person should think wisely of what he is about to put into the web or else he may be consumed by a foolish statement or accusation. A person who talks too freely of rulers and others without carefully considering the consequences of his statements can start as folly and end as wicked madness. The fool tends to be very talkative and say the same thing over and over without any order or judgment and maybe without any knowledge of what he is saying. A fool can boast of what he is going to do and what he will have as if he is the master of the future but not even the wisest person can foretell the future. All statements should then be carefully considered before making them.

**Ecc 10:15-18**

*The toil of a fool so wearies him that he does not even know how to go to a city. (16) Woe to you, O land, whose king is a lad and whose princes feast in the morning. (17) Blessed are you, O land, whose king is of nobility and whose princes eat at the appropriate time--for strength and not for drunkenness. (18) Through indolence the rafters sag, and through slackness the house leaks.*

All the labor of a fool is vain and fruitless so he is wearied by all that he does. His great ignorance is shown in that he does not even know how to go to a city when the road is broad and well known by most people. He may talk like he understands profound things but he is ignorant of them and does not know how to do the most mundane things. By a lad, Solomon does not necessarily mean by age but someone who acts like a child and shows his lack of maturity in all that he does. The land that has such a king will not last for he will not know how to defend the land properly. This can also refer to the land whose king is the devil:

2Cor 4:3-4 *And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, (4) in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

Morning was the time most used for consultation about the affairs of government and the time when the rulers should be sitting in judgment and trying cases. It was also the time for acts of religion and devotion so saying the princes were feasting in this time means they were not dealing with those affairs properly. In contrast a land is blessed when its king is of nobility and whose princes eat at the proper time and for strength and not for drunkenness. Such a ruler and the princes would be wise and skillful in governmental affairs. They would eat and drink in moderation. Indolence and slackness of rulers will lead to the destruction of the kingdom since its foundation will not be stable and the roof will leak leading to rotten timbers.

**Ecc 10:19-20**

*Men prepare a meal for enjoyment, and wine makes life merry, and money is the answer to everything. (20) Furthermore, in your bedchamber do not curse a king, and in your sleeping rooms do not curse a rich man, for a bird of the heavens will carry the sound and the winged creature will make the matter known.*

The making of a meal only for enjoyment is to promote mirth and gaiety to excess. It would be attended with rioting and drunkenness, reveling and dancing rather than a time for refreshing the body to provide strength for attending to business. Sometimes they would have a banquet of wine where men would drink of it until they become drunk. When moderately used, the wine can help make life cheerful but that hardly happened. The attitude that money can be the answer to all the problems of life would lead to a lifestyle lacking in wisdom. The ruler should not be cursed but one should rather pray for him, wish him well, and do everything to promote his welfare and for the successful running of the government. Not only should everyone not say evil things against a ruler in public but even in one’s household where servants may hear him people should only speak well of the ruler. Speech about the ruler should be carefully considered even in the bedchamber where only his wife and children may hear what he says. Cursing a rich man usually arises because one is jealous and resentful of his success so one should not curse this person in one’s bedrooms.

A bird of the air refers to how the secret things spoken in a house can be taken to the public by some strange means and be brought to the knowledge of the ruler and his people. The king might have spies and informers who would bring to him news of the behavior and sentiments of men who had an ill will toward them. One’s wife may also unknowingly tell what her husband said about the king to one of her friends who then told someone else and soon the words reached the king. One should be very careful about what he says at all times for the words can betray a soul that has evil intentions.