

# Dead Flies

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**Bible Text:** Ecclesiastes 10  
**Preached on:** Wednesday, April 17, 1985

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Please open tonight to the tenth chapter of Ecclesiastes and we want to begin reading at the 1<sup>st</sup> verse.

“1 Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour. 2 A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left. 3 Yea also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool. 4 If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences. 5 There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, as an error which proceedeth from the ruler: 6 Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place. 7 I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth. 8 He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him. 9 Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith; and he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby. 10 If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: but wisdom is profitable to direct. 11 Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment; and a babbler is no better. 12 The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. 13 The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness. 14 A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him? 15 The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city. 16 Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning! 17 Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness! 18 By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through. 19 A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all things. 20 Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.”

That's the Lord's blessing on his word.

*Our Father, as we come to thee tonight, we come realizing afresh that we need an understanding of thy word. We need it to live a life here in this world, a life unto the Son that causes us to know the truth and causes that truth to make us free. We thank you for the promise that this word which is truth will be in our hearts, will lead us and guide us to point us on the way. We're trusting you, Lord, to bless us for having come together tonight that these words might entrust us and cause us to understand your ways more perfectly. We thank you especially tonight for our Savior, the fact that he was willing to go to Calvary's cross and die there and shed his precious blood that we might trust him in that one sacrifice for sins forever and might have the gift of eternal life. We pray that each one before they leave this place tonight might know the blessed reality of sins forgiven. We pray that as thy people, that we might go forth better equipped to do thy work and to do thy will. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.*

I didn't have any intention of giving this chapter tonight but moving onto chapter 11 since it's been only about eight months now since I preached a message on Ecclesiastes chapter 10. It's only 3-4 times in the years that I've been preaching that I've ever repeated a message. My philosophy of preaching is that the Lord meant exactly what he said when he said "use not vain repetition as the heathen do." There are many preachers who know and love the Lord Jesus that don't love his people enough to put in the study necessary to come up with some new sermons. If you hear them preach a half a dozen times, you've heard everything they've got.

The message of salvation, of course, never changes but there is a whole Bible full of ways to present that message and there is no excuse for not doing it. What I'm looking for each time that I step into this pulpit is God's message to the hearts of his people. I've felt the definite leading of the Lord in recent days to speak again on the dead flies that are to be found here in the tenth chapter. This is a chapter that brings before us what I call the confusion of life under the Son. It's a confusion that's brought about by failure of the Lord's people to present a clear testimony since the inconsistent lives and the sloppy witnessing of those who claim to be saved can be a great hindrance in the work of God.

I mentioned to you the last time that the importance of this chapter came to me in a time of desperate need, a time when I was doing some pretty sloppy witnessing myself. About seven years ago, Mr. Lobret and I used to go to the prison hospital each week and there I learned a lot about preaching and he learned a lot about how to be patient. He'd lead the singing and I'd preach two sermons, one upstairs and one downstairs in the hospital and the only advantage that he had was that I didn't preach as long then as I do now. He got a lot of those gray hairs that you see back there from listening to me learn how to preach. But during our meetings, we somehow got into the habit of letting the prisoners select the passage of the Bible that they wanted to hear about. I'd never know until I stood up to preach what my subject was going to be but one night this big, tall, lanky fellow stood up and he said, "Preacher, tonight we want to hear something about Ecclesiastes 10." Now, I don't lose my composure very easily but when I opened my Bible and looked at the first verse of Ecclesiastes 10, I felt like one of those flies had just flown in my mouth. Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour."

Over the past seven years I've never forgotten the goodness of the Lord in showing me that night what this chapter is all about and it's about medicine. It's about medicine for sick people. The apothecary that's mentioned here in verse 1 is something that you see in drugstores or on signs denoting a pharmacy. The apothecary's jar is a mug which the pharmacists use to mix up medicine. He'd take a little wooden tool and he'd crush the ingredients that he'd placed in this apothecary jar and he'd mix them together in order to prepare a healing ointment and this healing ointment would often be the means of great blessing or even saving the life of an individual and that's exactly the picture that we have before us here. We saw earlier in the book the whole problem with man under the sun is that he has a deadly disease, the disease of sin and from the day that man is born, he begins to die because "the wages of sin is death."

This apothecary jar that we see here pictures the believer. It was an earthen vessel containing medicine. Now, when we get saved and come to know the Lord, we're just like that. The Apostle Paul said, "For we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." As those who are saved, we have in us the knowledge of salvation and it's life-giving medicine. It's a healing ointment that is the only cure for the disease of sin. We are God's chosen vessels to bear the message of life to a lost and dying world. The Lord Jesus is the Great Physician. He has written the prescription right here in his word that will give men and women and boys and girls eternal life. But his number one means of getting out the message is through us. He uses those who know him to do his work here in this world.

The point brought before us here in verse 1 is that there are at least two ways to take medicine, it might be more than that, but there are at least two. One of them is to take good clean medicine that sick people might not especially care for but they realize they must take if anything is ever going to be accomplished to heal them. Or it may be medicine with dead flies in it, that is very repulsive to say the least.

"Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour." I don't know how many dead flies you've ever eaten but I suspect that it's not many and we don't need to think that lost people are any more attracted to them than we are; they are not that much interested in eating dead flies. In the plan of God, it is we who make the healing ointment of the gospel attractive or repulsive to those who need it. There are whole chapters full of dead flies, the very things about you and me that send forth a stinking savour to those who observe our life and testimony if they're not the way that they should be.

Dead fly #1 is there in the first verse and it's known as hypocrisy. "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour." We've seen already many times in this book that wisdom is the Lord Jesus Christ. If we claim to know him, if we claim to have this wisdom and don't live like it, that sends forth a stinking smell to those who need the medicine.

Just “a little folly.” It doesn’t take much at all for one who is in reputation for wisdom and honor.” It could be just a little dishonesty. It could be saying something that is not quite true and people know it. It could be a hateful word, words that are inconsistent with the life of one who claims to have the love of the Lord Jesus living within. It could be a rebellious attitude. And you see, the interesting thing is this: lost people know what a Christian should be like. They might not live like it but they expect you to. If you’re in reputation for wisdom and honor, if you claim to know the Lord Jesus, they expect far more out of you than they do themselves and it doesn’t take very much to get a lost person cause to criticize.

This is a sad business because it’s very difficult to get believers to understand this. Once you let people know that you’re a Christian, you no longer make a fool out of yourself, you make a fool out of the Lord. Once people understand that you claim to know the Lord Jesus, they judge you on the basis of that testimony. They look at your life and they say, “Now here’s somebody who claims to be someone special. After all, I’ve been a Christian all my life, I’m just as good as they are but they claim to have something that I don’t have and yet here they are doing such-and-such.” They blame the church; they blame the Bible; they blame the Lord Jesus himself for what you say and do. And “dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour, just as a little folly does him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour.”

Dead fly #2 is insincerity. You see it there in the second verse, “A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his left. Yea also, when he that is a fool walketh by the way, his wisdom faileth him, and he saith to every one that he is a fool.” It is no accident that by nature a man’s heart is on the left because man by nature is a fool. A wise man’s heart is at his right hand but a fool’s heart at his left. But the thought here is that unless your heart is in the right place, your life will begin to show it. It won’t be long as you’re walking by the way, that your wisdom will begin to fail you. Just human wisdom, you see. When you do that, you begin to say by your life to everyone that you’re one of those foolish people. The left side in the Bible is the way of human weakness and the right hand is the power of God and God is saying to us, “Set your affection on things above. Get your heart in the right place.” He says, “Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life.”

The smell of insincerity is something that is very strong. It is something that is difficult for unsaved people to miss when they look at our life and testimony. It’s a very foolish thing to claim to serve the Lord if we don’t. It’s a foolish thing to claim to be concerned for others when we’re not because as we walk in the way, they look at our life, they have sense enough to know that we’re not practicing that sincerity that we claim as believers. Very soon in the normal course of daily living, we say to everyone by our attitude and by our actions towards the things of God that we’re a fool.

Now, I want to say something to you that might come as a terrible shock but when your heart is in the right place, people may question your sanity but they’ll never question your sincerity. They may not agree with you but it’ll be clear that what you claim is something that you believe in, something that you know to be the truth, at least in your life. The

greatest testimony in the world is sincerity. It impresses people when nothing else will. Now, if you say that you love the Lord and you want your neighbor to come to church with you and hear the word of God, they'll listen to that but then they'll watch to see how often you go to church. If your children hear you claim that the Bible is important, people ought to read it, they'll watch and see if you read it. If you tell them it's important to love the Lord's people, they'll listen to your conversations around the house and see if you really do because claiming to love somebody and then ripping them apart verbally is what's known as lying. Insincerity is a very smelly fly, indeed. It's one that sends forth a stinking savor to those who are observing our life and testimony.

Dead fly #3 is self-defense and we see it there in the 4<sup>th</sup> verse, "If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding pacifieth great offences." The spirit of the ruler is Satan. He's the ruler of the darkness of this world and he uses other Christians and unsaved people continually. He rises up against you to accuse and criticize and attack in every form and fashion. When your husband tells you that you're a terrible wife, that's not him, that's the spirit of the ruler. You may be a terrible wife but it's not too likely that the Lord is going to lead him to tell you in just that terminology. Many times the lost person or saved person either for that matter, will attack you just to see what your reaction will be. They want to find out what your response is going to be when faced with a difficult situation. They think to themselves, "Now, he claims to be such a great Christian, let's just find out."

But he says, "If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place." Many people can't heed this admonition because they've never gotten in their place to begin with but once we learn our place, you never have anymore trouble. Now, your place and mine is deserving absolutely nothing but to burn in hell forever and the majority of Christians who have a smelly testimony have it for one reason: because they think they deserve something. They are so busy defending their rights that the devil takes some petty little problem and makes a federal case out of it.

Now beloved, we don't deserve any respect from anybody. We don't deserve any help. We don't deserve fair treatment. We deserve to be dropped immediately into the Lake of Fire and remain there forever. And once we figure out that that's our place, how can anything happen to us that we don't deserve? How can anything happen to us that brings about a need for some great self-defense to be brought into the foreground? Yielding pacifies great offense. Our willingness to yield, to let another person have their way even when they're wrong, is something that's going to be a good testimony time and time again. When the Lord Jesus was reviled, he reviled not again and he proved that all he needed to do was speak a word and they'd all fall back to the ground. He could've called 12 legions of angels but he didn't do it. He didn't do it because when the spirit of the ruler rose up against him, he didn't leave his place. He'd taken upon him the form of a servant and that's exactly where he stayed.

"Great peace have they that love thy law and nothing shall offend them." That verse needs a little interpretation, doesn't it? Surely there is some way to explain that away. "Great peace have they that love thy law and nothing shall offend them." When we say

that we believe the Bible and love its truth and get offended, somewhere there is some mistake. Very closely connected with this, is dead fly #4: self-esteem as we see it there in verse 5, “There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, as an error which proceedeth from the ruler,” the same ruler again now, “Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich sit in low place. I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth.” This is a great evil, he says, under the sun. It’s an error which proceedeth from the ruler, same one, that old serpent, the devil and Satan. And the problem is this: folly is set in great dignity and the rich sit in low place. Saved people are supposed to be humble people. Those who know something about submission and having a servant’s heart.

In Ephesians 5, the Apostle Paul said, “Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess but be filled with the spirit.” That’s an admonition to every believer. We are told to live in the Spirit, to walk in the Spirit, to be led of the Spirit, just to live a Spirit-filled life but so many times it’s difficult to translate that from the realm of the mystical into the realm of the practical. But the word of God makes it quite clear: he says “be not drunk with the wine wherein is excess but be filled with the spirit,” and then he proceeds in the next few verses to explain what he means. One of the marks that we have there of the Spirit-filled life is “submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” This is just the opposite of trying to preserve your dignity and self-esteem as we read it here.

Submission to the authority that God has set in your life is evidence of the life controlled by the Holy Spirit. This is a place where each of us fails so miserably but it’s an extremely critical part of our testimony. There is no such thing as a personality clash among Spirit-filled believers. According to this book, we’re all supposed to have the same personality, the personality of the Lord Jesus Christ living within. That’s what makes believers so much more compatible than lost people. And if we cannot be submissive to our brothers and sisters in the Lord, it’s because we’re in rebellion against God himself. “Folly is set in great dignity, and the rich.” The poor of this world rich in faith who are heirs of the kingdom, they sit in the low place. They take that place of humility that the Lord Jesus took instead of trying to preserve a false dignity that they don’t have.

Dead fly #5 is self-will and we see it in verse 8, “He that diggeth a pit shall fall into it; and whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him.” There are two ways to send forth a stinking savor here: one is by digging holes and the other is by breaking hedges. The hole diggers are the people who go around setting traps for people and you don’t get folks saved by trickery. The prophet Jeremiah said, “Cursed be the man that doeth the work of the Lord deceitfully.” One common outgrowth of an inferiority complex, which is what most of the world’s population has, is to go around tearing down other people in order to make self look good and the idea that the devil puts in people’s minds is that, “If I can just somehow get them down to my level, it’s going to make me rise a little bit higher.” But you see, lost people can smell that fly a mile away, saved people too, for that matter. Instead of making someone think that you’re such a wonderful Christian, they laugh at you behind your back.

Another thing that is in view here is trying to give God a hand, to trap the lost. We have these ideas that somehow we're going to figure out this scheme to get somebody saved and yet no amount of plans and schemes is going to get the job done because nobody has ever yet been argued into salvation. Nobody has ever yet been deceived into coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior and when the unsaved get on the defensive, they are virtually unreachable so these traps end up backfiring. There are many a testimony that's been harmed by people trying to help God do his work in the hearts and lives of men. I'm talking about fleshy activity now, being unwilling to wait upon the Lord and be led and directed by the Spirit of God in seeking to do his work.

Another type here is the hedge breaker and this is self-will in another direction. "Whoso breaketh an hedge, a serpent shall bite him." God has appointed boundaries beyond which we dare not go. A hedge in these days was for the purpose of keeping out an enemy and protecting people from dangerous circumstance like we use a fence in these days. Many a Christian has been defeated by failing to recognize the hedges that God has set in his word and in their life. Many a Christian has lost their testimony by getting back with the old crowd, going back to the same old places with the same old people and thinking that by some great miracle, now they're going there and getting every one of them saved. We ought to be a testimony and if we're ever going to win anybody, we're going to have to win somebody who's lost but it's an extremely dangerous thing to be outnumbered by those who know not the Lord Jesus Christ. If we could understand something beyond our meager understanding that brings salvation to what it means to have an unregenerate mind, we might have some idea of what's going on behind the eyes of some of the people that we deal with because Satan is working in the hearts of men to seek to tear down your testimony every day that you live.

I've seen this happen over and over and over in the lives of men. Here is a crowd over here that have got their lives sold out to the devil and one of them gets saved and that crowd thinks to themselves, they don't make official plans now, this is the devil working in the hearts of men, they think to themselves, "If we can just get him back with us, if we can just get him drunk again, we can prove to ourselves that that thing is not real. We don't need it. That's not the kind of thing we need and all this is just something that he'll be over with in a very short period of time." Those kinds of things will happen to you if you don't recognize the boundaries that God has set in your life.

The same is true of sinful habits. Sin is nothing to play around with. Beloved, if you want to quit smoking, let me tell you how to do it: the best way to quit smoking is to tell yourself right now, tonight, that never again as long as you live, no matter what happens to you, you're ever going to pick up another cigarette again. That's the only way to quit smoking. You won't quit by cutting down. You won't quit by going from one pack to a half a pack a day. You'll quit when you drop it altogether and if you break through the hedges, that old serpent is going to bite you time and time again.

A testimony and victory over sin depends on our willingness to observe the hedges that God has set in our life. In olden times, these hedges were in different spots in the lives of different people. There might be certain things that other people can do that you can't do

because if you break through that hedge, the serpent is going to bite you. It could be that some people can sit around and talk all night and everything is fine but when you get into a situation like that, you begin to gossip just as hard as you can go. Now, the only way to stop that is to recognize the danger, to see the boundary that God has set in your life, to stay on the right side of that hedge because if you break through, the serpent is going to bite. We have to learn our limitations and not allow our self-will to get control of them and lead us off into sin and disobedience because that old serpent waits on the other side of the hedge to sink his poisonous fangs in us and soon everybody knows that we've been snake-bitten. Word gets around in a hurry.

Dead fly #6 is backbiting. We read about it in the ninth verse, "Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith." Peter calls believers "living stones that are built into a spiritual house" and a good way to get hurt is to mess around with the stones. For one thing, if you pull a stone out of the side of a building, the stones that are up above are just liable to fall right down on your head. You see, most of the Lord's people love one another and if you start attacking one, then several of them are liable to jump on you. Stone removal is God's business and it's always a dangerous work to try to take God's job away from him.

One of the things that the Lord hates, one of the things that are an abomination to him, is he that soweth discord among brethren. Lost people like to hear backbiting because it gives them one more reason that they stay as far away from you and your religion as they can get. They love to hear something bad about somebody else and especially if they claim to be a Christian.

Another way to get hurt in the deal is that the person that you're backbiting might just suddenly lose their humility and tell you a few things about yourself. That's been known to happen. I've known a lot of professional critics since I got saved and the interesting thing about them is that without exception, they are always the type of people who can't take criticism themselves. They get very offended when people begin to criticize them. So, the simple thing is to leave the stones where they belong and stay out of trouble.

Dead fly #7 is Phariseeism. We see it in the ninth verse, "Whoso removeth stones shall be hurt therewith; and he that cleaveth wood shall be endangered thereby." This is an important analogy that we should never forget: wood in the Bible is a symbol of humanity. The ark of Noah's day that saved him and his family was a big ship made out of gopher wood and it was pitched within and without. It was like that for a reason because wood in the Bible is a symbol of humanity and that word translated "pitch" is the same one that is translated over and over and over again "blood" in the Old Testament Scripture. And this ship, this ark, that saved Noah and his family was a picture of the Lord Jesus. The wood was a picture of his humanity because he was man as God intended man to be. But the thing that made salvation possible for Noah, or for you and me, was that precious blood, that incorruptible blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. In the tabernacle there was a wooden box called the Ark of the Covenant. It was overlaid with gold and it's like that because wood in the Bible is a picture of humanity and gold is a picture of deity and the Ark was a picture of the Lord Jesus. He



was humanity overlaid with deity. He was very God and very man and that's the picture that we have there.

Many times in the Bible, men are pictured as trees. The Lord Jesus said, "A corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." A tree, of course, is made out of wood and that's how it all fits together. In the case of the Lord Jesus, we're talking about sinless humanity but when we're talking about the rest of us, we're talking about sinful humanity and so wood in the Bible, whenever we see it, unless it's talking about the sinless humanity of the Lord Jesus is talking about the sinful humanity of man and we are the Lord's lumber jacks. We have this job of going around cutting down trees trying to get people saved.

Now, there's a right way and a wrong way to cut down trees and so often when it comes to witnessing, we get the idea that our job is to chop off the branches. Our conversation is directed at the sinful humanity of people, the sinful acts that they commit. We go on these self-righteous little campaigns to get somebody to stop drinking but there's a problem. A man may quit drinking and still go to hell. In fact, if he stops drinking without the Lord Jesus, he's a very good candidate for the Lake of Fire. It's hard for a man to humble himself if he gets the victory over that thing on his own. It's a wonderful thing to see a man get straightened up and to see his family get straightened out but we must not confuse that kind of thing with salvation. It doesn't have a thing to do with it.

The same is true with vulgar language. There are some people that pride themselves in their ability to go around and rebuke people for using vulgar language but the Pharisees were like that. They were so taken up with cleaning up the outside that they never realized that the problem was in the heart. You see women wearing short dresses because they need to get their heart right with God. Men have long hair because they don't believe the Bible. It's not that there's anything especially bad about them any more than anybody else, it's just that they don't believe the Bible. And you don't get people saved by approaching them with an axe in your hand to try to cut off those sinful practices in their life. They couldn't care less what you think about how they look or how much beer they drink, or how they dress, or whether they take the Lord's name in vain or not. They don't care what you think about that or what God thinks about it either or they'd quit if they did. They do those things because it's their nature to do them and what they need is not to stop these sinful practices, they need to get a new nature and then the sinful practices are going to stop.

One that loves righteousness and hates evil is going to see time and time and time again things in their life that need to be put away and they're going to bring themselves into obedience to the word of God. Wood chopping is very dangerous work for it makes people extremely angry. A deaf man can't hear the ungodly language that's coming out of his mouth. A blind woman cannot see that her dress is too short but they can smell those dead flies that send forth a stinking savor. They can spot that Phariseeism in your life and how proud you are of the fact that you don't do such terrible things as that for the Lord Jesus would never drink, he'd never smoke, he'd never use vulgar language. But you have to get people's understanding straightened out before they want to be like the Lord Jesus. That's why when John went out with his message he said, "Now, therefore,

the axe is laid to the root of the tree.” You don’t cut down the trees by knocking off their branches, you get right down to the root and the root of the problem is that man is lost and in need of a Savior.

Dead fly #8 is backsliding. We see it there in the tenth verse, “If the iron be blunt, and he do not whet the edge, then must he put to more strength: but wisdom is profitable to direct.” It’s telling us here about a dull axe when we go out to do this work of cutting down the trees for the Lord. And we find exemplified here the tools that God has given us to work with. He’s given us the tools of prayer and Bible study and fellowship with other believers. He’s given us these things that we can use to do his work; they help us in the work that is to be done. But if you have a dull axe, if the iron is blunt and you don’t whet the edge, you don’t sharpen up your tool, then you’re going to find out that it takes a great deal more strength to do the work. We can work ourselves half to death and see very little accomplished in the work of God. It’s not just a question of getting out the word. If that were the case, you could pick up the telephone and give everybody a few verses and they’d all get saved. But it takes the power of God in our life to be effective in doing his work. “The letter killeth but the spirit giveth life.” We need to spend time with the Lord Jesus confessing our sin, seeking his blessing, seeking to understand what the hindrances are in our life, asking for Holy Spirit power to be moving in our life as we go out to witness, to hand out tracts, to tell people about the message of the word of God. It’s not just a question of fleshly wisdom, fleshly effort and it’s so easy to get into this backslidden condition where our tools are dull. We forget the importance of having sharp tools to do this work that God has given us to do.

Dead fly #9 is childishness. That’s the only word I can think of to describe this. We see it there in verse 11, “Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment; and a babbler is no better. The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness. A fool also is full of words: a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him?” This is a very tricky subject to talk about because the problem is that most people never say anything. Most people never or almost never, give an effective witness for the Lord Jesus. They have no zeal at all. But there is such a thing as a zeal for God that’s not according to knowledge. Little children babble incessantly. They get excited about something and they rattle on until they worry you half to death. They like to talk just to hear themselves talk and just so that you’ll know that they’re around and that’s not the way to win people. They are not quite as impressed with what you’ve learned as you are.

In says in verse 11 that if you don’t charm a serpent, he’ll bite you and the same thing is true of some believers. You just about have to put a spell on them to keep them from attacking you at all the wrong times but we see in verse 12, “The words of a wise man’s mouth are gracious.” We’ve seen many times how they wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of the mouth of the Lord Jesus. It’s so easy to be like the Christian barber that used to get men in his chair and he’d lather them up for a shave, he’d whip out his straight razor and get it right down to the man’s throat and say, “Are you prepared to

die?” You see, if our approach to people smells like a dead fly, we don’t need to expect to be a good witness.

There is a very real sense and we need to understand this, there is a very real sense in which you have to win people to yourself to win them to the Lord Jesus. Now, you can have a passing witness on a street corner that might get somebody saved but I’m talking about the people that see you every day of your life, the people that you come in contact with time and time again. Not the ones you’re just passing by on your way around the world but the ones that want to know if your life and testimony is real. If they can write you off in their thinking as some kind of a nut, all further conversation has come to an end, or at least it might as well have. You haven’t got a thing in the world that they want to hear you say.

Here in verse 13 it says, “The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness: and the end of his talk is mischievous madness. A fool also is full of words.” We need to have something worth saying and then we need to say it in a way that makes sense. The Lord Jesus said, “Cast not your pearls before swine, neither give that which is holy unto the hogs lest they trample them under their feet and turn again and rend you.” There is no point in telling a lost man about the intricacies of the Bible that are precious to your heart. They’ll stomp all over those things and then they’ll turn around and attack you for having said them. Lost people need to hear the gospel. They need to hear the simple things of the word of God and that’s what we need to give them in a way that’s going to make an impression on their heart and life. It’s not just enough to go out and slap somebody upside the head with a big packet of tracts. It takes a willingness to go forth with a spirit of understanding and a spirit of humility and a desire to communicate a message that’s about to cause thy heart to break. If we have that kind of burden, we’ll have no problem. There will be no difficulty at all in giving forth a testimony that’s going to speak to the hearts of men.

Dead fly #10 is ignorance. You see it there in the 15<sup>th</sup> verse, “The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.” This is the ointment itself; this is the way of salvation. We look for a city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God. And we ought to be experts in giving people directions in how to go to the city. It’s not hard to get there but the problem is that most people don’t know how to go and it’s easy to weary somebody with all kinds of talk about everything in the world to impress them about how much we know about the Bible and never get around to the point of the whole thing.

“The labour of the foolish wearieth every one of them, because he knoweth not how to go to the city.” Everything else is wasted. We just make people tired if we don’t get across this message. There are three important things that people need to know about how to go to the city and any one of those three missing means they haven’t got it. This is extremely important, especially here in America where easily 90% of America’s population knows the remedy. They know the story of Jesus. They’ve heard that story all their life but most of them are not saved. What we’re seeking to do by the power of God is communicate

that message, to get it across to people in such a way that they all know how to go to the city.

It takes three things: 1. they have to see the need. You have to get people lost before you can get them saved. Most people have no consciousness of the fact that they are sinners before God in such a way as to bring them down to hell forever. Now, they'll all admit that they've done wrong things, they'll agree with you 100% that everybody sins but as far as having a personal consciousness of a need in their life before God because of their sin, most people don't have it.

The second thing we're trying to communicate to people is the remedy. People know that generally, about how Christ died on the cross for our sins according to the Scripture, how he was buried and how he rose again the third day according to the Scripture. But the thing that we need to emphasize there is this: that that is the only way of salvation; it's the only remedy that man can possibly find. We need to emphasize that it's this one sacrifice for sins forever that people must be trusting in. Not in their own works, not in their church membership, not in their baptism or anything that they can do. People need to know the need.

They need to know the remedy but they need to know the cure. There is a difference between the remedy and the cure. The remedy is the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus but the cure is to personally receive the Lord Jesus Christ and that's where most people are missing. "To as many as receive him to them gave he power to become the sons of God even to them that believe on his name." It's not enough just to know about him, it's not enough just to understand that you've done things wrong in your life. The only way to go to the city is to receive him and that's what salvation is all about.

Dead fly #11 is in verse 16, "Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning!" He's speaking to us here about human leadership. "Blessed art thou, O land, when thy king is the son of nobles, and thy princes eat in due season, for strength, and not for drunkenness! By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through." We're talking here about the necessity for recognizing the need to be leaders, to be outstanding leaders, in the realm of our influence. Now, you may be a housewife with 25 children but you've got all kinds of leading to do in that situation. You might be a little child in a schoolroom with 20 other people but you've got a lot of leading to do if you're willing to do it.

It takes a willingness on our part to surrender ourselves to the Lord Jesus and to the work that God has given us to do and this dead fly of laziness is something that plagues a life time and time and time again. Lost people are watching us to see if it means anything to us to be a Christian. Is there anything about us that makes us outstanding compared to other people? I'm not saying that you have to be a great personality or you have to be a graduate of the Dale Carnegie course. I'm saying simply that you need to know the truth of God and know it as a present reality every single day in your life so that it causes you to live and work for his glory.

We're seeing before us here that, "By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through." This is what we're seeing today in the work of God: the house in the Bible is a symbol of the professing church and the professing church has fallen. It has fallen for all intents and purposes in a spiritual sense in this age in which we're living and it's for lack of leadership among the people of God. Where are the D. L. Moody's and the C. H. Spurgeon's? Where are the Campbell Morgans? Where are the Billy Sunday's? They are not on the scene today. A bunch of weak-kneed, pussy-footing, watered-down, two-bit preachers of the gospel that take no stand for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. The whole world acclaims their ministry and where is the message of the prophet of God? Where is the word of rebuke against the powers of darkness that have engulfed the professing church today? There are many television broadcasts, there are many a radio broadcast that would go off the air tomorrow or at least their listening audience would be chopped by a great deal if men were willing to stand up and stand out and tell people the truth in this hour in which we live. Men have turned their ears away from the truth.

"Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child, and thy princes eat in the morning!" There is a need for men in the work of God. There is a serious shortage of them today, men who are willing to demonstrate to a lost and dying world what it means to know and love and serve the Lord Jesus no matter what this world has to say or do about it.

You see another dead fly in verse 19, it's worldliness. "A feast is made for laughter, and wine maketh merry: but money answereth all things." It's so easy to get caught up in the things of this world and lose our testimony for the Lord Jesus. We like to eat and drink and make merry and buy and sell and plant and build just like the world and they look at us and they say, "There is one of us. Nothing to worry about there." And it's like that because they're experts on worldliness. They know what it's all about. They know what it means to go out and live it up and indulge yourself and enjoy yourself and pay no attention to the work of God. They'll spot that in your life in a minute. If they see that money answereth all things for you, if they see that life is just enjoying yourself and playing little games, they'll never believe your testimony.

You see, it's very possible to be prosperous in this world and be a Christian but it's very difficult because it's such a costly thing. It takes just that much more in giving of time and talent and money and all these good things that God has given in order to stay close to the Lord Jesus and do what must be done in the work of God.

Dead fly #13 in verse 20 is double mindedness. "Curse not the king, no not in thy thought; and curse not the rich in thy bedchamber: for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter." I think it's critically important that that comes last because a double minded man is unstable in all his ways. Sadly enough, this is exactly what we see so often among the Lord's people. Elijah came to Mount Carmel and he said to the people, "How long caught ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, serve him but if Baal, then follow him."

It's this basic double mindedness that makes us unstable in all our ways. We cannot be one thing in our thoughts and another thing in our attitude manifest to the world. Solomon said in Proverbs, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." You can't say one thing in your bedchamber when nobody's around to listen and another thing in church and in public without somebody finding out very soon what the condition of your heart is and it's this basic double mindedness that smells just like a dead fly. Unless people know where you stand when this attitude comes out, "a bird of the air shall carry the voice and that which hath wings shall tell the matter."

There are many a person sitting here tonight that would be extremely embarrassed if they knew what I know, knew how much I know about what they've said over the course of the last many years. It's so easy to think that you can say something and nobody will ever know about it but I know most of the things that are said somehow. Sometimes it's by a miracle it would seem, just like a bird of the air carrying the voice and that which hath wings telling the matter. We need to be extremely careful what we say even in our bedchamber. There might be somebody hiding under the bed. Not me, now, don't get that idea but I'm just saying to you that we need so desperately to come to God for a broken heart. That's the only answer. Realizing our natural tendency to do everything wrong: to be insincere; to be hypocrites; to be actors on the stage of Christianity. Beloved, that's not Christian living. We need to be willing to be real no matter what the cost may be and let God work this miracle in our life that it takes to get all those dead flies out of the ointment. That's the only way they'll ever get out is by a miracle.

If I stand up here and preach for an hour just to cover a few of them, can you imagine how long it'll take to get all those things sorted out and straightened out in your life. It's a lifetime job but we can do it very simply and very practically every day if we're willing to surrender our life and our will to the Lord Jesus. He's willing to take control of our lives and salvation and continue to control that life as we walk in surrender to him day by day. He's willing to take the life of every single person here in this place tonight. He's willing to take it and use it in a way that's going to count forever, to bring this message of life and salvation to this world that has this disease of sin. Beloved, we've got to be willing to pay the price. It's so easy to get deceived, to get hung up in every imaginable idea that can take us away from the work of God. It's easy to work too hard and it's easy not to work enough.