

**Ecclesiastes 9: 18b & 10: 1-3; “The Perfumer’s Ointment”, Message # 67 in the series –
“Remember Your Creator”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on
June 28th, 2020, in the Afternoon Worship Service.**

Who is the perfumer here in verse 1 of chapter 10? I believe that it is you the believer who knows that your life is a fragrance of Christ among those who believe and those who are perishing. 2nd Corinthians 2: 15 – “For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. And in a greater sense I believe that it is Christ who is the Perfumer here. For He is the One who gives you saving grace. Others who may profess to know Christ and have common grace, they would claim Christ’s fragrance is what they wear, but theirs is a fragrance of compromise. Christ perfumes your life with His saving grace if you truly know Him, but these verses are saying that even though this is so, the good fragrance of your life can possibly be ruined by the compromises which you might make with sin. That is, your good reputation could be ruined by the little sins which you may commit, the little flies you allow to get into the ointment of your heart and life before God and men.

So, 1st of all – I want to have us look at the problem which is stated here – One sinner destroys much good. Then 2nd – I want us to look at the problem compounded – That is, we need to think together about the dead flies which can get in the Perfumer’s ointment.” And then 3rd – I want us to look at the remedy for this problem – The wise man’s heart being at his right hand. May the Lord give each of us grace to see how we might live our lives to glorify Him.

1st of all – The Problem Stated: One sinner destroys much good.

“Wisdom is better than weapons of war; but one sinner destroys much good.” We saw in our last 2 studies how Christ’s wisdom; the wisdom of the one poor man, delivered the besieged city of the Church. He by his wisdom delivered the souls of believing men and women from eternal harm and death. If we are understanding spiritually what was happening to us before we were saved, it was this: Our souls were being besieged by sin and Satan. Christ’s wisdom was to “take upon Himself the form of a servant”, and to live in such a righteous way that He humbled Himself to the point of death, even the death of the cross for our sakes. By this one act He delivered the whole city of God’s people; all who would trust in Him for salvation. He defeated Satan, the great prince of this world that had come up to besiege the city, and to ensnare and entrap us, in and by his schemes.

By Christ’s wisdom we are delivered from the snare of the trapper (that is Satan), and the deadly pestilence of sin and death. He suffered that we might be free. He suffered so that we might be safe. Psalm 91: 1 – “He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.” “I will say of the Lord, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress; My God, in Him I will trust.’” “Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the perilous pestilence.” “He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall take refuge; His truth shall be your shield and buckler.” “You shall not be afraid of the terror by night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noon-day. Christ’s wisdom was not only better than weapons of war in our being saved. But in trusting in Him, He actually brings to us the spiritual weapons of war that we use to defeat him ourselves in our daily walk with Christ. He has given to us the shield of faith and the buckler of His truth, so that we might live by it.

Why did our Lord Jesus Christ have to do all of this? It is because one sinner destroyed much good at the beginning of the world. I am speaking of the first man Adam. Let me read to you Romans Chapter 5, verses 17-19. “For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.” Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.” “For as by one man’s disobedience, many were made

sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous." Here we have described for us, the one sinner who destroyed much good. It was Adam, in the beginning. He was given every good thing that he needed for life and godliness. He was righteous and God set before him, by way of the Covenant of Works, the good path of personal obedience, based upon his keeping himself from the sin of eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Adam was our Federal Head. That is, he stood in the place of all of his descendants in his keeping this one commandment that God gave to him, not to eat of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam did not keep it, and so this disobedience, this "one man's offense", resulted in death reigning in every man; that is, every man who came after him, except one. That One was Jesus Christ. This one man's sin destroyed much good. It brought sin into the world and death to every descendant of Adam. Christ's wisdom was, that He, being the Son of God, and righteous in everything that He said and did, also stood in our place as a Federal Head of a new race of men and women who will someday be really and actually perfect in righteousness. It was because of the one Man Christ's righteous act, that the free gift of salvation came to all men resulting in justification of life. (verse 18) God is now justified in giving the believer in Christ the gift of eternal life, and in that gift, is also included, all of the grace which will transform their soul so that they will become a righteous person.

Many people (sometimes even true Christians) do not quite understand how much they need this precious and powerful imparted grace which will transform their soul, and give them the power to lead a godly life. They do not understand that they need Christ's actual on-going Personal intercession and His help in living their life to the glory of God. I am speaking of Christ giving you wisdom and power by His Holy Spirit who actually helps you to think righteous thoughts every day in connection with your prayers. If you do not see that you need this powerful working of the Holy Spirit in your heart, it may be the result of spiritual pride in your own thinking; that somehow you believe that you have great enough natural strength and abilities to keep God's commandments on your own. You do not realize that the Lord has many things to teach you about your dependence upon Him for the victory that overcomes, the world, the flesh and the Devil. You do not quite grasp the thought that that one sinner, even you yourself, can destroy much good.

Let's think together about what happened in Joshua Chapter 7. Joshua has just finished leading Israel in battle against the city of Jericho in chapter 6. Israel won this battle and they defeated the enemy by following God's exact instructions. Joshua had told them in Chapter 6, verse 18 that they, "by all means should abstain from the accursed things, lest they take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it." They had won the battle of Jericho, and because the Lord had been with Joshua, it says in verse 27 of Chapter 6, his fame spread throughout all the country. After this, though, it says in Chapter 7, verse 1- "But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of the Lord burned against the children of Israel". Nobody knew of Achan's sin except he himself, and God, until they went into the battle against Ai and they were defeated.

Now look at chapter 7, verses 8-13. Joshua is praying and he says, this - "O Lord, what shall I say when Israel turns its back before its enemies?" "For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear it, and surround us, and cut off our name from the earth." "Then what will You do for Your great name?" "So the Lord said to Joshua: 'Get up!' "Why do you lie thus on your face?" "Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them." "For they have even taken some of the accursed things, and have both stolen and deceived; and they also put it among their own stuff." "Therefore the children of Israel could not stand before their enemies, but turned their back before their enemies, because they have become doomed to destruction." "Neither will I be with you any more, unless you destroy the accursed from among you." "Get up, sanctify the people, and say, 'Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because

thus says the Lord God of Israel: "There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you."

Then God showed them how they could discover the one sinner who had destroyed much good in Israel. He had all Israel brought before the Lord tribe by tribe and family by family until it was discovered who had done this awful thing. They discovered that it was the sin of covetousness in this one man; Achan, who, it says in verse 18 saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold, and he coveted them. And when he took them he hid them in the earth in the midst of his tent. This was the reason for Israel's defeat; this one man's sin. The wisdom of God is better than weapons of war because God will be with us in whatever we do in accordance with His Word. But He cannot be with us, establishing the advances of His glorious kingdom, and helping us to win our spiritual battles, if we hold on to secret sins, or attempt to disobey God's word in breaking any of His commandments.

No, this problem would only be solved for Israel when the sin, and in this case the sinner, were put to death. This man Achan was evidently not a believer at all, but I am trying to direct your attention to how important it is to deal with our secret sins and repent of them. If you will deal with your secret sins in the presence of the Holy God, privately, in great humility, and by confession of those sins to God, with the full purpose of repenting of them, then God will not need to bring them to light. He will not have them dealt with publically before the congregation. This will not need to take place if each of us will follow the instructions of Colossians chapter 3, verses 1-10. "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God." "Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." "For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." "When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." "Therefore put to death your members which are on earth, fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." "Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, in which you yourself once walked when you lived in them..." You can see here, dear Christian, how important it is to set your mind on things above. It is very important that each of us has private dealings with God over our secret sins, and come to repentance over them, and we learn to live our life setting our minds on things above.

2nd – We want to look at the problem compounded: Dead flies in the ointment.

"Dead flies putrefy the perfumer's ointment, and cause it to give off a foul odor." "So does a little folly to one respected for wisdom and honor." We need to see that the problem of sin is compounded by what it does to our good reputation as a Christian when we allow "dead flies" to land in the perfumer's ointment. The perfumer's ointment was kept in a box in those days. If there was not a cover over it, flies could get into it; they would invariably die in it, and thus the smell of their dead little bodies would ruin the whole box of perfume. Even so, your heart is like the box which houses the precious ointment of Christ's grace; that grace which leads you to good works and to the doing of what is right. The flies in the precious ointment of a man's reputation are those little sins that are not guarded against, well enough, in your heart. The text explains them being "a little folly" engaged in. We know that it is a Christian who is being spoken of, because the "little folly" is being tolerated by a person who is respected for their wisdom and honor. Fools are not respected for their wisdom and honor.

Sometimes we who are Christians may feel justified in engaging in a little folly. But the text is saying that we will regret it later on. Folly is a lack of good sense, it is a lack of understanding, or foresight. We may not be thinking of how foolish the action is that we are contemplating, and then actually do take. Let's look at a few verses which will help us to understand this. Listen to Psalm 85: 8. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for He will speak peace to His people and to His saints; but let them not turn back to folly." "Surely His salvation is near to those who fear Him, that glory may dwell in our land." So these words are teaching us that it is the essence of wisdom when God's people, His saints, will hear what He the Lord will speak. For us, this is found in our

receiving and acting upon God's written word the Bible. Folly would be disobedience to God's revealed will, when we know better. James 4: 17 – "Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin. So, instead of that, we ought to be those who are actively cultivating the new life of Christ within us in our thoughts, words, and deeds.

Let me read to you Ephesians 5, verses 1-4. "Therefore be imitators of God as dear children." "And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma." "But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks." So you see, the cultivation of good actions to guard your thoughts in your mind and your heart, this is what will help preserve you from the flies landing in the ointment of all of your good intentions, all of your best thoughts, and all of your good works combined; things which would spoil your good reputation as a Christian. Unclean thoughts, covetousness, filthiness, foolish talking and coarse jesting are all flies which land in the mind, and if they stay there, they will bring dishonor to God and to ourselves.

So Christians must attempt to keep themselves from these sinful and vain thoughts. They must have the good sense not to allow them to gain entrance into their heart; there to breed death. James 1: 13 – "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone." "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed." "Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death." This is like the flies landing in the perfumer's ointment. You must attempt to prevent the flies from landing there, and dying there. Think about Jeremiah 4: 14. "O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved." "How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you?" You see, this is the usual way of the unbeliever; to allow evil thoughts to lodge within him. But in the life of a wise Christian person, it never can be so for any length of time if he is wise. He knows that a little folly is enough to produce immense mischief.

3rd – The remedy for this problem – The wise man's heart is at his right hand".

Verses 2 and 3 say – "A wise man's heart is at his right hand, but a fool's heart is at his left." "Even when a fool walks along the way, He lacks wisdom and he shows everyone that he is a fool." So, we need to understand that the wise man's heart being at his right is a very pictorial way of saying that when a righteous man needs wisdom, it is right there for him; right there by him. It will be natural to him as it is in his using his right hand to do things with, if he is right handed. In the case of the fool, his heart is at his left. Everything that he does shows forth the fact that he lacks the wisdom that he needs to do things which would be right and true; good for himself and others. What is the remedy then to keep the flies from landing in the Perfumer's ointment?

I think that it is found in Philippians 4: 8. "Finally, my brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things." As a Christian, you should pray each and every day and ask the Lord to help you to keep your mind on these things. Pray also remembering that when you believe in the Lord Jesus you can come at all times to Him and ask Him for the wisdom that you need. Psalm 16, verses 7 and 8 say: "I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel; my heart also instructs me in the night seasons." "I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved." These are very powerful verses about what we need to do in our daily prayers to Christ and to God. Bless the Lord who has given you the counsel of His word, and who will give you the counsel of His Holy Spirit in relation to His word. Your heart will instruct you; you will find the right thoughts, you will find everything that you will need in wisdom coming to you from God Himself in relation to His precious and powerful word, and thus it will keep these flies from landing in the Perfumer's ointment.

And then finally, remember His words in John chapter 14, verse 15 – “If you love Me, keep My commandments.” “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. So it is God’s Spirit who helps the sincere, devoted Christian to prevent the Perfumer’s Ointment, that is Christ’s grace, from being putrefied. Don’t receive the grace of God in vain, it says in the book of Galatians. See to it that you help the Spirit’s good work along, by mortifying your sins in His blessed strength. Put them to death. Remove the flies from the Perfumer’s ointment, and God will be glorified by you.