

The Danger of Foolishness pt 5

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Ecclesiastes 10, Lord willing. I know, this means nothing, huh? Lord willing we're going to get through the end of this chapter. We're not in a hurry, are we? No. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, not just the thoughts, every word. Amen? We need every last bit of it.

Chapter 10. We're going to close one section and try to enter a new section here in chapter 10. Dealing, if you would, with verse 14,

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.

Then the new section,

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,

Have you ever heard, "a little bird told me"? That's what we're talking about, a little bird. Them birds are everywhere, aren't they? Like those DC pigeons, not scared of anything.

and that which hath wings shall tell the matter.

Let the church say, amen.

Father, add thy blessing to the reading of your word. Cleanse me of anything of self and fill me with your Spirit. God, I bow down at the cross tonight and were it not for the cross, then is our preaching in vain, but because beyond the cross is an empty grave, we

can face tomorrow and today we can too. Now bless the preaching of your word in Jesus' name. Amen.

You may be seated. Thank you for standing.

Moving our way through the book of Ecclesiastes, we're dealing with the thought under the sun and how a wise man, the wisest man for that matter that ever lived, gifted by God with a measure of wisdom more than any other human being had ever received, found himself talking crazy, thinking crazy, living crazy, even though God had given him wisdom. Why? Because he proceeded to view life under the sun apart from God. You and I know very well, take God out of anything and you've got a mess. And so we're moving our way through the passage of Scripture seeing Solomon as he talks, as he lives, as he makes decisions, as he views things, as he states his opinions, and we don't espouse to every view that Solomon has in Ecclesiastes because many of them are contrary to the word of God but we do glean from Solomon's example telling us, if the wisest man could plummet all the way down to foolishness, then so can we.

In chapter 10, we're dealing with the danger of folly. Never to downplay foolishness. Think that a little bit of foolishness is not that bad. A little bit of leaven won't hurt the whole lump. A little bit of sin is not really that serious. Could I tell you, that anything that is apart from God, anything that displeases God, and anything that is contrary to the word of God is a big deal.

The danger of folly. We've seen in this passage of Scripture as Solomon introduces us to the revealed ways of a fool, he continued with the relevant warnings concerning the foolishness. Last week we looked at routine work and continue, if you would, with reckless words. As we deal with this section in this passage of Scripture, we begin to understand that when a fool engages in dialog, his language is dangerous. You don't want to utter foolish words. Death and life are in the power of the tongue.

The reckless words we were introduced to last week involved, if you would, destructive content. We saw in this passage of Scripture that the words of a wise man's mouth are gracious. In other words, a wise man has a pleasant distinction to his words but a fool has a personal demise to his words. In other words, he goes around trying to hurt people and the words he uses to hurt people end up hurting himself. We saw this discussing craziness, if you would, of the fool.

Notice the Scripture, "the beginning of his words are foolishness," verse 13, "and the end of his talk is mischievous madness." You say, "Pastor, what are you saying?" I'm saying a fool's discussion is so crazy it starts with a ridiculous commencement and it ends with a ruinous conclusion. In other words, the longer he talks, the worse it gets. Have you ever wished somebody finished right after they started? He's a fool. We're not trying to belittle someone or talk down to someone but I'm going to tell you something, when you begin to speak without the wisdom of God and you begin to address people without discernment that comes from God, you start off making nonsense and you end up getting worse. If you don't want to be someone that discusses in crazy talk, don't engage in foolishness. And by

the way, it's often in the midst of a foolish rant or rage that you end up saying things that later you have to say, "I really didn't mean that."

We move on to what is called displayed carelessness, uncontrollable rambling. Look at verse 14, full of words. That just means talks too much. Just still going, still going, still going, still going. Have you ever looked at your watch and said, "He's still talking"? Not in church, I mean. I'm preaching the Bible. I will tell you this: when men get up and preach opinions and men get up and chase rabbits and don't stick to the text, they ought to sit down. It's uncontrollable rambling, if you would. It's just going on and on, talking a whole lot and not saying anything.

He says, "This is a fool. This fool is full of words, full of words, full of words, but a man cannot tell what shall be; and what shall be after him, who can tell him?" He has uncontrollable rambling and therefore unpredictable results. Here's what happens when a fool starts talking: you start bracing yourself. Have you ever gotten around someone and start talking and you go, "Uh-oh. O Lord, ain't no telling what they're gonna say. Oh, my goodness." Listen, listen, that's characterization of a fool. This is what Solomon is saying and, by the way, that's why we need wisdom, amen? Because we don't ever want to be caught in conversations. By the way, we need to redeem the time so that when we open our mouths we are speaking words that benefit people. Ephesians 4, we talked about "not corrupt communication but that which is good to the use of," what? "Edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." We want to be speaking the life into people, not death unto people. But sometimes when we engage in foolishness, we begin to talk not realizing what we say.

The last section of this discussion, if you would, of these reckless words is what I call distorted conceit. This is someone whose around bragging about what he can do for other people when he can't even help himself. "The labor of the foolish is weary to everyone of them." Notice the wearisome toil. He's conceited but his conceit is distorted. In other words, have you ever met somebody who was proud of himself, not realizing he didn't have anything to be proud of? It's like going out to the basketball court and finding one of those guys out there, I mean, he's got the shoes, he's got the high socks, he's got the knee brace, he's got the elbow sleeve, he's got the headband, the wristband, got his own basketball, got his little sandals, brings the shoes in a box. I mean, he's got basketball tattooed on his arm. He knows everything about basketball and can't hit the side of the bucket. He's dressed the part. By the way, we're not good Christians because we dress up when we come to church. We're not good Christians because we look the part. We're not good Christians because we sing in the choir. We're not good Christians because we have a position in the church. We're good Christians because we follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

He says the fool is just wearing himself out. Wearing, toiling, and working hard and getting nowhere. Sweating and making no progress. Wearisome and bragging about it. "Let me help you with something. Let me counsel you." The fool sets up his own counseling agency and can't counsel himself. Now look what the Bible says, "because he knoweth not how to go to the city." Now watch this now: he's going around the building, "You need a ride? You need a ride? You need a ride? You need a ride? Here, you can

ride with me. You can ride with me. Do you need a ride? Do you need a ride? You look like you don't.... Do you need a ride?" And everybody gets in the car and says, "I finally got a ride," and then the fool doesn't know where he's going.

He knows not how to go to the city. Now in Bible times, signs were well-posted and all you had to do to get to a city was just follow the signs, but the Bible says this guy is such a fool that he can't even follow the signs. You see, fools don't like following instruction. Do you know why? They don't think they need it. You see, "the fool has said in his heart, There is no God." The Bible doesn't say he believes in his heart, he said in his heart. He is so recklessly careless and so morally indifferent he actually stands up and says things to people when their conscience tells them otherwise. Do you understand? When you get to uttering that there is no God, you are stepping past the conscience of a God who lets you know he's real. The heavens declare the glory. You can't even look at the sun and the moon and the trees, you can't look at a gorilla, I don't care if he doesn't kill a boy, you can't look at anything in this day and age and know that God is not real. Yet the fool says, "There is no God."

He's wearisome in his toil but he's wayward. He has no direction and that's why Proverbs says, "The companion of fools shall be destroyed." You see, you'd better make sure before you get in the car with somebody that whoever you get in the car with knows where he's going. Are you listening to me? You say, "Pastor, what do you mean about getting in the car?" I'm talking about taking counsel from certain people. I'm talking about listening in on certain people. I'm talking about copying certain people. Amen? I'm talking about running with certain people. You'd better run the background before you run with them. Amen? You'd better make sure, you see, because all you have to be is a companion of fools to be destroyed, "But Amnon had a friend."

Reckless words. The last section of chapter 10, if I'm true to my intention, is what I call ruling workers. We saw foolish rulers earlier in the passage of Scripture and now we're looking at the ruling workers, and not only the rulers but those that work underneath them. I found some interesting things in this chapter and I want to challenge you with them.

"Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child." Now, we obviously understand that God is not through Solomon is not taking it literally because we know in the Bible of some young kings who were great kings. Josiah was eight. Amen? I mean, David was young. So he's not talking about age, he's talking about maturity. Now here's what he's saying: woe to a group of people who are led by an individual that is immature. In other words, position but not prepared. You see, everybody wants to be in charge, but wanting to be in charge alone does not qualify you. You know when Paul said to Timothy, "Lay hands suddenly on no man"? Now, the context here is government, a king who is a child, so the implication here – by the way, the point here is immature lordship is what I'm calling it. Immature lordship.

"Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child." What do you mean? He's unprepared superior and, by the way, not just unprepared man or unprepared woman, it could be an

unprepared boy or unprepared girl. In other words, anybody who is calling the shots who's not ready to be in charge will not only mess it up for him but mess it up for others and here's what happens: when an unprepared superior is in charge, he renders, if you would, unrestrained subordinates. Now, here's what the Scripture says: the king is a child, and watch this now, "thy princes eat in the morning!" In other words, those that are underneath him are more concerned about pleasure than they are about performance. In other words, they wake up first thing in the morning, "Give me my food. Give me my fun. Give me my party." And here's what Solomon says, "They don't know how to act because they don't have somebody responsible leading them."

And I will say this: the context, the interpretation is governmentally, but this mess has crept into churches where leaders are in charge and they don't know what they're doing. Dr. Bob Jones said everything rises and falls on leadership. You see, just because you're a leader doesn't mean you're leading in the right direction. And leadership takes preparation. And by the way, can I tell you that the biggest preparation for leadership is following. I'll say it again: the biggest way to prepare to lead is to follow. By the way, follow a good leader. Amen? This is why these disciples, this is why Peter...and by the way, Peter messed up. He walked on water and then looked at the storm and sunk. Peter messed up when he was ready to chop off Malchus' ear. Peter messed up when he said he would die with Jesus and he found himself denying Jesus. Peter messed up when he went to fishing. And Peter messed up when he denied the Lord. And the Lord looked at him, by the time Acts 2 takes place, the same Peter stands up on the day of Pentecost and 3,000 people get saved, baptized, and join the church in one day. Why? God took him through the process of maturity and, my, we all need it.

Listen to me: nothing good comes quickly. Let me say that again: nothing good comes quickly. Have you ever looked at somebody and said, "I'd like to have that. I'd like to do that. I'd like to have that authority. I'd like to be in charge. I'd like to have that shot." Watch this now, "I could do better than that person at that spot." You've never been there. Whenever you get – listen to me – you'd better realize God has me where he has me now so that when I get where I'm going, then I'll be ready. And by the way, Solomon when he had good sense in the book before this said, "You don't walk into the house and take the highest seat and then get embarrassed because somebody says you're sitting in somebody else's seat. Go down to the low seat." He said, "You'd better take the low seat because at the very worst, you won't get moved and at the best, you'll get exalted to the higher seat." In other words, you don't need to sit high until you're prepared.

And sometimes, God gives us what we ask for to introduce us to the fact we're not ready. "Let me have it." By the way, every one of us at work or on the team or somewhere, at church, has thought, "It looks so easy from here." I was preaching at a church in Columbus a couple of years ago and they took, I guess it was two balloons, maybe it was three balloons and said, "Keep hitting them up in the air and see how long you can go." And these folks were getting up there, hitting them up in the air, falling all over the place and I'm sitting there, "You dummy. Just hit it right to you and come on, you can..." Guy going five seconds, boop, the balloon came and hit the ground. Another guy, ten seconds, boop, the balloon came and hit the ground. They said, "Brother Baldwin, you do it." I

said, "I'd be glad to." Three seconds. Everything looks easy until you have to do it. Everything looks simple until you sit in that seat.

There is preparation. There is preparation. That means before I want to preach in a pulpit, I've got to be willing to preach in the prison, and preach in men's prayer, and preach at the homeless shelter, and preach at children's church, and teach a Sunday school class. Somebody say amen. Before I'm ready to lead, before I'm ready to tell somebody what to do, I've got to be willing to be told what to do. Why? God is getting me ready. Everybody wants to be Elisha when he's got a double portion, but who wants to spend ten years just pouring water on Elijah's hands? Unprepared. I remember saying, "Daddy, when can I...? When can I...?" No. No. No. "Are you going to let me?" No. No. No. "But I think..." No. No. No. Sit down. You're not ready for that. That's not your place and when it's your place, God will position you. Amen? "Promotion cometh not from the east or the west, God is the judge, he setteth up one and taketh down another." Immature lordship.

Number 2: impressive leadership. What's impressive leadership? Here it is, "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!" I'll tell you what impressive leadership is: it's leadership that is governed by principled spirit. In other words, leaders that lead not by how they feel but by what is right. Can I tell you, if you're ever going to be a good leader, you've got to make tough decisions and that means everybody won't agree with you and everybody won't like it and it won't be popular. And listen to me: if you think you're going to be a good leader because you do what everybody wants you to do, can I tell you, the people that you please will be the first ones to turn on you because you're programming them to follow you because you please them and the moment you go, "We're not doing that." What? "We're not doing that." Do you know who I am? "Yes, you're the one I fooled into thinking I was going to listen to you all the time."

He says they're noble. He's not just talking about a royal pedigree, he's talking about noble men of honor, men of character, men of integrity. And by the way, may we get out of this day, all you young preachers, of being people who aspire for public image and popularity. At the judgment seat of Christ, Jesus is not going to ask, "How many Bibles did you sign? How much did your church run? How many conferences did you speak at? How many YouTube videos were on the internet about you?" It's all going to be about integrity, not image. Did you tell the truth? Were you who you were out of the pulpit like you were in the pulpit? By the way, out in the world in leadership and in our government, nowadays it doesn't matter about doing right, it doesn't matter about telling the truth, it's all about pleasing people. God, give us a revival in America where we get back the people that we look up to are not people that dunk a basketball, that run a football or that fill up a stadium at a concert. God, help people that we look up to to be people that tell the truth; that their word is their bond; they're transparent; they're honest; they're sincere; they're genuine; they're right with God. Men that love their wives and wives that submit to their husband and children that obey their parents and church members that have the love of God shed abroad in their heart by the Holy Ghost.

Principled spirit. Here's what principled spirited leaders produce: purposeful service from others. Here it is, look at the Scripture, "thy princes eat in due season." Now remember the immature leader? Do you know what his princes did? They ate in the morning. The principled leader, unlike the immature leader, his servants don't eat in the morning, they eat when? Due season. What do you mean? That means they have correct pursuits. In other words, they eat at the right time. In other words, they're not worried about being pleased before they perform. I don't know about you, I'm not interested in working with people that are ready to eat when we haven't finished yet. Right? How many of you know sometimes once you feed them, that's it? Now, I do know some folk once you feed them they can really go. Those are the rare ones. But most people, I mean, and depending on what you feed them. You feed them a big meal, it's over, alright? But here's what they're saying: they eat in due season. They don't want their reward until they have put in their labor.

They are princes that eat in due season and watch this now, they not only have correct pursuits but they have constrained passions. Notice the Scripture, he says, "This is why they eat, they eat for strength and not for drunkenness!" In other words, "Feed me so that I've got strength and give me strength so that I can do work." In other words, "I'm not interested in eating for my pleasure or my passions, I'm interested in eating for my strength so that I can work." By the way, we are driven by a passion filled society. Lust. Immorality. There wouldn't be Hollywood if there weren't so many sensual passions. Amen? There wouldn't be half the television shows on tv if there weren't so many sensual passions. Everybody wants, "What's for me? What's for me? What's for me? What's for me?" No. No. No. No. The wise person says, "We're not working for me, we're getting fed so we have strength." And by the way, that's why when we pray and we ask God to bless our food, we pray, "Lord, bless the food to be a nourishment and strength unto our bodies and that our bodies are strengthened for thy work." I don't just want to get full because I like food, I want to get full because my body needs food so that it can work for the Lord and please him. That's why we ought to want to get strength. When you're headed to church you ought to say, "God, give me strength. God, when I eat before church, I don't want to eat before church because I know it's going to be too late to eat afterwards. I want to eat before church so that my mind is sharp to hear the Bible and so that my body is fresh to sing the songs of Zion, and so that my countenance is fresh so that people greet me, they're not thinking they're coming to a dead church with a dead god, but they're coming to an alive church with a risen Savior." Amen.

He continues on, if you would, with impairing laziness. "By much slothfulness the building decayeth." Here's what he's saying: deliberate slothfulness. He didn't say a little bit of slothfulness. I mean, everybody has a moment where you just feel lazy. Somebody say amen. But these aren't people that have moments of feeling lazy, they have crafted a career. I mean, sometimes lazy people don't even realize they're being lazy. I mean, you could be carrying the pulpit over their head and they're not even moving. They have programmed themselves to block work out. Much slothfulness, deliberate slothfulness, here's what happens: a decaying structure. You see, he says, "If you don't give attention to the needs of a building, it will decay." And our builders in here tonight would tell you if you're too lazy to keep up with upkeep, eventually the building will start talking to you.

Decaying structure, and then notice the deteriorating stability. Guess what happens to the house when you're idle? It drops through. You see, even things that were built well sometimes need to be reinforced. Are you listening to me? By the way, could I be practical in our application? Churches that were built on strong foundations all over America, it amazes me how I could preach at a church one year and go back to the next church and find out that firm structures in that church a year ago have now dropped through. And I'll tell you why: the members and the pastor have not been custodians of the truth. Could I tell you, in a society that is full of lies and heresy, every single one of us that is a believer of the Lord Jesus Christ needs to have our screwdriver and our drill and our hammer and our wrench and every single day, buy the truth and sell it not. The world is rewriting marriage. The world is rewriting morals. The world is rewriting everything that's true but as Christians when we see the world trying to unscrew something that God tightened in, we get our screwdrivers and say, "No. It's still a man and a woman. It's still righteousness that exalts a nation. We'll drill it back in." Churches still need holiness and godliness and that's not the job of just the preachers, it's the job of every believer. Keep your tools in your hand otherwise it will drop through.

By the way, in our homes, we've got to keep tightening up. It doesn't take much for the devil to get in. There's nonsense on the internet. There's, good night, there's foolishness on the tv, the radio, social media. Y'all know I was going there, didn't you? Social media. "Oh, he's always talking about social media." And every week somebody's doing something foolish on it. So foolish, they can't even tell. I was saying, I don't know where I was, I guess it was last night, I was preaching in Charlottesville and I was there and somehow the brain doesn't seem to register in the fingers like it does the mouth and we'll type stuff we'd never say. Yeah, I'm wondering how you sign that right there. Yeah, we'll tell you afterwards. They're looking like, "What did he say?" Have you ever seen people on Facebook just typing, typing, typing. Do you look at all that? And you get up to them and they say, "Hello."

I was reading in my, I guess my devotions a couple months back that John was writing his epistle, I can't remember if it was 2 or 3 John, but he said to whom he was writing, "There are a whole lot of other things that I'd like to say to you but I'm not going to write them, I'm going to say them in person." I'm going to preach a message on that one day. Not tonight. But, you know, sometimes you ought to not say things over text and over email and you ought to man up and woman up and child up and open your mouth and say it, and if you can't say it with your mouth, you ought to keep it to yourself because typing on Facebook is barking but talking in public is biting. I don't think we think about what we type sometime. Eleven hours and 23 minutes a day that the average teenager spends on some form of social media. You've heard me say it before. Eleven hours and 23 minutes a day and some of them have inherited the addiction genetically. You'll get that when you get home. Just get buzzing when you don't check that Facebook and you don't tweet something. I mean, I've never seen so much...I'm not going to finish, but I'm going to let you out on time.

I've never seen so many ignorant tweets and I don't even have Twitter, but people tell me what people Tweet. I mean, who cares, "I just spilled ink on my shirt"? I'm talking about men of God. "I have the flu today. I'm gaining weight." Duh? You know, it's an over-exaggerated opinion of yourself. It's making yourself think that people actually care and you're building up your ego by thinking you've got to report to the world your every move when the only one checking your Tweets is you. Are you listening to me? God help us. We've got to get out of this it's all about me syndrome and let everybody know what I'm doing. They are still begging me, "So put your calendar on the internet." I don't like the way it looks. It looks like I think everybody wants to know where I am preaching. Who am I? Just a sinner saved by grace.

By the way, this is practical too: not only is it not spiritually wise to put your business on the internet, it's not even socially wise. Telling everybody, it's like saying, "Hey thief, rob me. I'm going on vacation for two weeks and everything in my house will be unattended, even my dog is staying somewhere and I want everybody to know it." I mean, people can rob you if they want to but don't help them. Telling everybody where you're at. "We're still gone," and sending pictures of everywhere you are and the thief is laughing at you, "Yeah, y'all, we've got another day. Get one more thing. I wanted that necklace but I heard a noise. We're going back tomorrow. They're still gone." Then you're Tweeting where you are. "I'm on 95 coming through North Carolina. In Fredericksburg, just got caught in a traffic jam." The thief says, "Go on back. They're stuck in traffic. Get the dishwasher. Get the microwave. Get the bacon. Fredericksburg is at least 45 minutes away."

We've got to be careful. Be careful, really careful about engaging in that which is unwise. We're in a world that's desperate for wisdom and who better to see it in than in those who are children of the only wise God?

Our Father, for your help we plead. For me, God, I ask you as a pastor to give me wisdom. We don't want to be foolish. We don't want to go off and say things we shouldn't say. We don't want to do things we shouldn't do. We don't want to be guilty of being so foolish that we are doing things that just cause the structure to decay and the stability to deteriorate. We're lazy, help us, Lord. Give us wisdom and may, Lord, through that wisdom, you keep us stable. In Jesus' name. Amen.

As he plays, let's stand together. Won't you join at the altar, some have come already. Be wise. Be wise. It's so easy to jump the gun, be indiscreet. To act and think later instead of thinking aptly. You know, it wouldn't kill us every once in a while just to say, "God, what do you want me to do? Should I go there? Should I say that? Should I...? And, God, if I really want a stable Christian life, can I get it being lazy? Can I become a great Christian without attention to detail? Can I? Can I have a great home? A great church? A great ministry by just letting it flow?" The sluggard says, "There's a lion in the street!" but he move. "There's a lion in the street!" The last thing the Christian family and the church needs today is self-proclaimed reporters pointing out everything that's wrong. We need some people to do something about it and I just believe it's impossible to be a good Christian and be lazy and you'll never find one that is. May God help us.

Lord, hear what we've prayed and may we hear what you've preached and help us to please you and honor you. And, God, where we're clueless, goodnight, I often find myself saying, "Lord, what do you want?" Help us to wait until we hear your answer and to be committed enough to do exactly what you say. We love you. Thank you for tonight and add thy blessing to what's been said. In Jesus' name. Amen.