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### **Ecclesiastes 10:1-11:6**

According to Solomon, wisdom means people understand that there is something bigger than them, they know they have been undeservedly pursued by God, they have submitted to God and now walk in obedience to God. By contrast, the fool is the man who pretends he's indestructible, he's entitled and that he stands as center of the universe

**Ecclesiastes 10:1** *dead flies make a perfumer's ointment give off a stench; so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor*

We all want our "goods" to outweigh our "bads" in people's estimation of us, even in God's estimation of us. But we want to establish that estimation standard, while God has already set his: perfection; perfect holiness

**Romans 3:23** *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*

**Ecclesiastes 10:2-3** *a wise man's heart inclines him to the right, but a fool's heart to the left. Even when a fool walks on the road, he lacks sense, and he says to everyone that he is a fool.*

Sounds like a tag line for the Republican Party

This is not speaking to external actions, but the internal heart's motivation behind those actions. When our motivations are not transformed by the truth of the gospel through the Holy Spirit, any of us will eventually prove to all that we're foolish – thinking that our good actions will somehow cement our place as the center of the universe; that our good actions will cover up our self-serving motivations.

Want to know how this plays out in a church?

Take away someone's ministry title or role, and see how they react

**Ecclesiastes 10:4** *if the anger of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your place, for calmness will lay great offenses to rest*

They're everywhere. Everywhere you go, there they are. You can't get away from other fools who think they stand at the center of the universe. Sometimes that fool is your boss...or your pastor. So he says, "Calm down. Breathe. Don't run, don't move from this place to this place to this place trying to run away from a broken world. No matter where you go, there they are." The world is broken, everyone else is broken, and you're broken too. We all take our own brokenness with us.

**Ecclesiastes 10:5-7** *there is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as it were an error proceeding from the ruler: folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place. I have seen slaves on horses, and princes walking on the ground like slaves*

In prior centuries the famous people were the victorious military and political leaders, the people who found cures for diseases, and the people who invented things or wrote things that

benefitted other people. Now? The bigger an idiot someone is, the more TV time and press coverage they get.

The best network news stories? Those that involve people doing stupid, illegal things  
How is it possible that any of us have even heard of Paris Hilton or Charlie Sheen?  
Reality shows don't work if everyone on them lives as quiet and wise men and women

**Ecclesiastes 10:8-11** *he who digs a pit will fall into it, and a serpent will bite him who breaks through a wall. He who quarries stones is hurt by them, and he who splits logs is endangered by them. If the iron is blunt, and one does not sharpen the edge, he must use more strength, but wisdom helps one to succeed. If the serpent bites before it is charmed, there is not advantage to the charmer.*

Working smarter is always better than working harder. Wise people have an idea of where they want to go, and a plan for getting there.

Nobody stumbles into godliness. Nobody just wakes up one day to find himself or herself spiritually mature, biblically informed and gospel literate.

Too often we just assume "things will work out for themselves," or worse, we hope someone else can do all the work, all the study, all the discipline and planning, even all the suffering so they can pass it on to us at no cost or effort to be borne by us ourselves. (Ever tried to live your Christian life vicariously through someone else?)

Sometimes we're like the snake charmer that never got around to learning how to play his flute, how to actually charm a snake. He forgets to move his arms while he plays. (Snakes don't hear, they react to the vibrations from movement.) He lets the snake out of the bag – and everyone around, including the snake charmer ends up dead, for lack of his advance planning.

If the snake charmer ends up dead, he can't go on to his next snake-charming gig  
He can't make the money he planned to make that day – or for the rest of his life

**Ecclesiastes 10:12-14** *the words of a wise man's mouth win him favor, but the lips of a fool consume him. The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness, and the end of his talk is evil madness. A fool multiplies words, though no man knows what is to be, and who can tell him what will be after him?*

The wise man knows where he's going, knows what he wants to be and he's working a plan to get there. He also surrounds himself with men and women who are beyond him in maturing and experience and represent an example worth following. The fool surrounds himself with people who are stuck in the same rut he is and is completely content walking with people who are okay where they are, have no plan, no desire to go anywhere else except to the fridge for another cold beer on the way back to the couch.

And fools will use a lot of words and make a lot of promises proclaiming what they will do and what they will accomplish – fools make lots of vows, but rarely see those vows through

**Ecclesiastes 10:15** *the toil of a fool wearies him, for he does not know the way to the city.*

If personal comfort is the goal, all you need is a fridge full of beer, a really comfy couch, a giant flat screen TV, and a wife or children that will wait on you

This is not just talking about having an effective life plan. This is talking about having a plan for how the gospel can take more and more root in any of us. Just coming to church on Sundays does not cover it.

**Philippians 2:12-13** *therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

Our salvation means we are now justified through Christ – that is solely His doing

Our salvation worked out, called our “sanctification” is something we participate with God in accomplishing

**Ecclesiastes 10:16-17** *woe to you, O land, when our king is a child, and your princes feast in the morning. Happy are you, O land, when your king is the son of the nobility, and your princes feast at the proper time, for strength, and not for drunkenness!*

This is a narrow reference to governmental leaders. But it is a broad reference to any leader  
Like men leading in their marriages and their children in their homes

We all want now what took our parents decades to achieve. We also want to live like we’re already retired, even though we don’t want to wait until we’re 65+ to get that.

**Ecclesiastes 10:18-20** *through sloth the roof sinks in, and through indolence the house leaks. Bread is made for laughter, and wine gladdens life, and money answers everything. Even in your thought, do not curse the king, nor in your bedroom curse the rich, for a bird of the air will carry your voice, or some winged creature tell the matter.*

Lazy people do not share with others. They do not host other people in their homes – because they don’t think they have the resources to do so. And they don’t want to clean up afterward.

The second verse is not saying that money fixes everything. Here’s what it is saying, but we have to read it backward:

You need to go make money

With money you can buy wine and gladden someone else’s life

Eating bread does not make you laugh

But if you’re eating with other people, you can tell your lame jokes and other people will be around your table to laugh with you, or at you

And Solomon says this is all good

Do you think it better to be entertained at someone else's house, than to be the one entertaining other people? Are you a social mooch?

And have you ever made fun of someone who is faithful, keeps busy and gets things done? Lazy, unmotivated people always resent people who are not like them.

Sometimes they verbalize that resentment

And sometimes it gets back to the other person, and the fool proves himself to be a fool  
...with a big mouth

**Ecclesiastes 11:1-5** *cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days. Give a portion to seven, or even to eight, for you know not what disaster may happen on earth. If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves on the earth, and if a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it will be. He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap. As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything. In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand, for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.*

First this talks about taking risks. This risk in particular being delayed gratification. Working first, investing first.

Next it talks about excuse-mongering. We make excuses for being lazy; we call it "procrastinating," but procrastinating just means that we put off doing what we know we need to do or should do by finding other less important things to do that we convince ourselves are suddenly more important and crying out for our attention.

Sometimes the excuse for inaction is that we're waiting for more favorable circumstances:

"When the kids are gone I'll have more time and motivation to share my faith"

Finally it talks about being generous – with your time, your resources

Live life with no regrets!

A fool spends his lifetime trying to convince himself that what he fails to do isn't because he didn't plan to do it, nor because he didn't work hard for it, and that he won't end up with regrets.

Maybe it's because what the fool wanted is not worth wanting

**Colossians 3:23-25** *whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord, and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ. For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality*

