

INTRODUCTION:

1. [Image] I have been dreading this passage since I decided to preach the book. This is the most difficult-to-understand passage in the whole book. It has sections of proverbs many of which seem disconnected. I don't think that the verses are difficult to interpret by themselves. Instead, I think it's hard to see how all of these pieces come together. It's like putting together a puzzle when you don't have the box which has the picture of what it should look like at the end. Brianna and I were trying to do that last night and it was hard. We didn't know where the buildings went because we didn't have the picture.

2. [Need] We don't get to opt out of listening to and obeying God's Word just because it is difficult to understand. Too often this is an attitude that Christians can have when it comes to studying God's word. Something gets hard so we quit. If we really love Jesus and if we do love and value God's word, then we need to roll up our sleeves and wrestle with it even when we don't know what's happening.

3. [Subject] That's a lot of setup, but what is this passage actually about? I think that this whole passage is about the destructive power of foolishness. And about how much devastation it can leave in its wake. I'm going to do my best to tie these proverbs together so that you can see what this passage has to teach us.

4. [Text] Ecclesiastes 9:13-10:20

5. [Preview] I'm going to cut up the passage a little differently this morning. We're not just going to walk through the passage consecutively. We'll look at two big chunks that I think are tied together thematically, and then we'll conclude the same way that we have been throughout the series asking the question what is this passage have to do with Jesus and the gospel? So buckle up, put on your hard hat, and let's get ready to wrestle with what God's word means for us.

Point number 1 **The destructive power of folly. The destructive power of folly.**

The entire Book of Ecclesiastes is meant to teach us how to live wisely.

And it's a hard book.

Sometimes it can even be a brutal book.

Particularly because it shows us the limits of wisdom.

The brutal reality of life does not mean that wisdom is worthless.

Primarily because foolishness is so destructive.

Foolish words, foolish decisions, foolish actions often end in blood.

They destroy people.

9:18 tells us that "one sinner destroys much good."

one foolish person set loose in a community can blow it up.

And he tells us a story at the end of chapter 9 comparing the power of wisdom and folly.

13 I have also seen this example of wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me. 14 There was a little city with few men in it, and a great king came against it and besieged it, building great siegeworks against it. 15 But there was found in it a poor, wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man. 16 But I say that wisdom is better than might, though the poor man's wisdom is despised and his words are not heard. 17 The words of the wise heard in quiet are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools. 18 Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.

Here we have the picture of a really small town.

Not a town like Marlow or Comanche.

Picture of town of like four people.

A place like Darr Nebraska.

I drive by it all the time on I-80.

It have two houses, a grain silo, in a big green sign that told you this was Darr, Nebraska.

A little city with few men that you wonder how this even got to be called a city.

And against a place like that a huge King comes against it.

And he brings all of his armies.

His cannons, his artillery, his Calvary and all of his generals.

But somehow a poor homeless man saves the small City from destruction.

His wisdom alone delivers them from all this evil.

But fitting with the theme of Ecclesiastes everybody forgets about him after the fact.

The wisdom is great but it's limited.

But even though wisdom gets forgotten and ignored it's better in the might of folly.

And it seems as if the weapons of war are folly personified.

The foolishness is as destructive as the artillery down the Fort Sill would be to your house.

It is way better to be under-appreciated and totally forgotten but wise,
Than to be a destructive fool.

Verse one really sums up how destructive folly is.

He compares it to a dead fly in perfume.

**1 Dead flies make the perfumer's ointment give off a stench;
so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.**

Some of you might like to wear perfume or cologne.

How many of you would want to wear perfume with dead bugs in it?

If I brought you some and gave it to you as a gift for Christmas, I told you there's just one little problem with it it just it had one dead bug in it. But it's only one so it should be okay.

How many of you would still wear that?

How many of you would just go ahead and throw it in the trash without even bothering to smell it?

Why?

Because it's ruined that little bit is causing a great stench.
And a little bit of folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

In the same way, this is how the Old Testament talks about sin.
It is the leaven that seeps through the entire loaf of bread.
A little bit of sin ruins us it rots us from the inside out.
Foolishness and sin are destructive powers that ruin everything they touch.

Ultimately we have a choice on which road we're going to take.
Are we going to walk in the path of wisdom following in Jesus's footsteps?
Or will we try to blaze our own path?
Foolishness tries to go its own way.
It is like a hiker on the Appalachian trail who decides they don't need to follow the path,
They will just head off into the woods and do their own thing.
Folly is destructive.

10:2 **"A wise man's heart inclines him to the right,
but a fool's heart to the left."**

This verse describes the two paths.
The wise take the path on the right which is the correct way
The foolish take their own path
And you can actually tell the path the fool is walking on just by watching them.

Look 10:3 **"Even when the fool walks on the road, he lacks sense, and he says to everyone that he is a fool."**

Picture of somebody walking on 81 and going in circles
They are wandering around in the middle of an intersection at 5 o'clock.
Everybody sitting in their cars would look and think "what is this fool doing?" "They lack sense."

Walking around like that is going to lead to your destruction.

Folly is obvious.

It is like walking in traffic blindfolded and drunk.

It will lead to your destruction.

And everyone can tell how foolish it is.

Verse four tries to give us wisdom about how to handle an angry leader.

4 "If the anger of the ruler rises against you, do not leave your place, for calmness will lay great offenses to rest."

If someone is angry and yelling at you the wise response is to stay calm.

The fool retaliates which only escalates things.

Which leads to destruction.

I have two little rulers in my house.

Rather two little boys who think that they are the rulers of the house.

Many days their anger rises against me.

Now if I respond with more anger and yell and scream at them that doesn't help anything.

This is destructive because it destroys them, it destroys our future, harms our relationship, and it hurts my own soul.

Instead, I need to be wise and respond with calmness and wisdom.

Wisdom heals while folly can only destroy and break.

We're going to go ahead and jump to verse 8 for a moment.

Verses 8 through 11 are somewhat pithy Proverbs of wisdom.

I don't think they're just randomly chosen.

I think that they are here to show us that every path we walk on in life is dangerous.

Whether you are walking in the wisdom of Jesus or you following the path of the fool there's danger everywhere.

10:8 **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.

You don't have to walk blindfolded in traffic to get hit by a car.
That can happen even if you are safe on the sidewalk.
There is danger in simple things.
If you dig holes in your front yard there's a chance you might fall in it
whether you're smart or dumb.

If you're doing some remodeling in your house and you break a wall you
could find out there are snakes living in it and they bite you.

If you carry rocks around you might hurt your back.
You're outside chopping up firewood with an axe you could hurt yourself.

All of these are unavoidable dangers.
But being foolish puts you in Greater Danger.
Verse 10:10 **"If the iron is blunt, and one does not sharpen the edge,**
he must use more strength,
but wisdom helps one to succeed."

If you're trying to chop wood with a dull axe it's going to be hard.
But if you're wise and you sharpen it will be much easier.
Wisdom helps you succeed.
Foolishness will lead you to failure.

You can be wise and still fall into a pit or get bit by a snake or get hurt
when you're chopping wood.
That's just the reality of life.
But if you are a fool,
then you can bet you're going to fall in more pits get bit by more snakes
and get hurt by more stones.

Because foolishness is destructive.

11:11 **"If the serpent bites before it is charmed,
there is no advantage to the charmer."**

If you are wise and don't use your wisdom then it will lead to your destruction.

It doesn't matter if you're a snake charmer if you didn't charm the snake before you tried to hold it.

If you're really wise but you act like a fool it will lead to destruction.

Solomon was the wiser man who ever lived and he often acted like a fool. He constantly refused to obey God's commands. He abused women and treated them as a commodity. And his foolishness lead to issues that fractured the nation after his death.

10:12-15 **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 toil of a fool wearies him,
for he does not know the way to the city.**

The last few verses here up to verse 15 are all about the destructive power of our mouths.

Because fools never stop talking.

They multiply their words.

When they start talking about something you recognize they have no idea what they're talking about.

By the time a fool finishes talking they have started to drive you crazy.

But the foolishness and even the foolish talk is self-destructive.
The lips of a fool consumed him.
His talk leads to madness
Folly always leads to being burned out and overwhelmed.
Folly leaves you lost.
With nowhere to go and nowhere to turn.
It will get you into problems that it can't get you out of.

[transition] So foolishness is destructive. But this destructiveness can be amplified. One foolish person can wreck a church. But if you have an elder who is a fool, the senior pastor is a fool, then it will leave a lot of devastation in its wake.

The destructive power of foolish leaders (10:5-7, 10:16-20). The destructive power of foolish leaders (10:5-7, 10:16-20).

Fools cause plenty of trouble on their own.
But when the leader in a community is a fool there is even more pain and suffering and sin.
Instead of just a fly in the ointment, it's like taking all of the perfume out and replacing it with skunk spray.
That is how dangerous foolish leaders are.

10:5 **There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as it were an error proceeding from the ruler: 6 folly is set in many high places, and the rich sit in a low place. 7 I have seen slaves on horses, and princes walking on the ground like slaves.**

The great evil that he sees is when fools get put in charge.
When Folly gets to run the company just because of who their dad was even though everyone knows they're going to run it into the ground.
The fool gets selected to a position in government that makes you scratch your head and wonder why is everyone falling for this?

But this isn't a new problem.

There is nothing new under the sun.

So when we see foolish people in charge it makes us think maybe God made a mistake.

It's almost like an error.

Because we might not recognize how destructive the foolishness of our own hearts is,

but all of us recognize how destructive the foolishness of bad leaders is.

The rich, slaves, and princes are used as examples.

But again remember the genre of scripture we are talking about.

This is wisdom literature it is proverbs.

Saying that the people who are in charge should not be in charge.

And the people who should be in charge are being ignored and overlooked.

He is not making a statement about class or supporting the nobility.

This isn't a pro monarchy ideal.

His point is that fools are in charge when they shouldn't be.

Fools are the ones in the high places

**10:16 *Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child,
and your princes feast in the morning!***

He proclaims a prophetic woe over the land.

It is a lament and a weeping.

It is terrible when the good King dies and a spoiled teenager suddenly gets to have all of the power in the Kingdom to do whatever they want.

History is filled with the stories of fools who gained power and wasted it.

Fools who spend their time feasting for breakfast.

I like breakfast as much as anybody.

He isn't making an anti-breakfast statement.

Solomon was saying these leaders first thought when they wake up is how they can party and have a good time.

But the land will suffer because they are not concerned for the land they are only concerned for themselves.

They are fools.

10:17 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!

In contrast, we have somebody who should be king.

Not because people of nobility are more innately prepared for leadership.

When the leader is not a fool

When it is somebody wise.

When It is somebody prepared for the role.

Then they lead in the way a leader should.

The wise leader feasts and celebrates

But they do so at the proper time.

They do so for strength.

Their feasting is for the happiness and strength is for the good of the whole land not just their own stomach.

It is not just that they can get drunk and have a good time.

You see when you have good wise leaders they use their power and their influence not for themselves but for others.

The foolish leaders are only interested in themselves.

And they will destroy anybody and everybody in their path so that they can get what they want.

Unfortunately, this happens all the time even in churches.

Where churches actually exist just so that the elders or the pastors can be in charge and do what they want.

And I've been in places where they will admit this.

And they will say that they are setting up and designing the church that it could just amplify all the gifts of their leader because he's the one in charge.

Churches that do that chew people up and spit them out.
It is incredibly destructive.

It's destructive for people's souls who have to endure that.

It's destructive for the witness of Jesus the cause of Christ.

It's destructive even for the souls of those fools who will have to answer to God for what they have done.

10:18 **Through sloth the roof sinks in,
and through indolence the house leaks.**

Gives you the picture of a house falling apart.

When Fools are in charge the house that they are over just begins to decay.

The fools are over businesses things begin to leak.

When fools are over families, the family begins to sink.

When fools are over churches there's destruction as well.

Foolish leaders rot everything out spiritually.

Even if the outside of the house looks good.

Even if the listing was nice and the real-estate agent said it's a good deal.

The foundation could be bad.

The roof could be about to leak.

Even if the church is shiny and growing.

They have all the ministries in the world

And the preaching is awesome.

The church could be rotting out spiritually on the inside.

Because foolish leaders destroy people.

And they destroy what they preside over.

These last two verses of the chapter are especially strange.
They are probably the most difficult in the whole passage.

10:19 **Bread is made for laughter,**
and wine gladdens life,
and money answers everything.

How can we make sense of verse 19?

Because Solomon has spent the last nine chapters making sure we know that bread laughter wine and money are not going to fix all your problems in life.

So did he change his mind?

No. I don't think so.

Because of the context, I think this is describing the attitude of foolish leaders.

We already see that the king is a child

They are a fool who feasts in the morning.

And the land is falling apart because of their rule.

Because they are only focused on bread and wine and how it brings them Joy and they believe that money is the answer to every problem.

For me that's the way that I think that first makes the most sense.

I think the most likely interpretation.

This verse shows us the fools attitude.

But verse 20 is a little tricky as well

Even in your thoughts, 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.

He tells us that we need to be careful to not curse foolish leaders.

But even when we see fools in charge.

Even when we see the destruction that is being left in their wake.

That we should be careful to not curse or speak cruelly about them.

And the reason he gives is that you might get caught and be punished.
Birds are spies who could hear your voice and report you.

Again this is wisdom. It's a proverb.
If you make a habit of talking bad about people eventually one of them is probably going to hear it.
It's wiser to keep your mouth shut.

I think this verse is also difficult because we just don't like it.
Saint Augustine said that we have a habit of calling some of the plain things and scripture confusing because we just don't want to obey them.

God just finished telling us how awful and destructive these leaders are.
Then He tells us to not curse them.

It seems like this verse is telling us we shouldn't talk badly about even leaders that are foolish.

I don't like that because I want to.

I want to complain about them.

God's word tells us no.

I think as Christians that means that we don't fly flags, wear hats, or t-shirts, or put signs in our yard that curse our leaders.

Doesn't it matter whether they're a fool or not.

God's word tells us no.

I have seen too many who claim to be Christians being disobedient in this area.

But God tells us to not curse our leaders.

Not even in your thought life.

Even understanding how destructive foolish leaders can be.

Even understanding the devastation that is very real that can be left in their wake.

As Christians, we still have to follow Jesus.

We don't get a pass because we don't like who the president is, or the governor or the mayor or whatever leader you want to fill in the blank.

[transition] Where is the gospel in this? Folly and foolish leaders are so destructive it can be overwhelming. Where is our hope?

Point number 3 Our hope is in **The redemptive power of King Jesus. The redemptive power of King Jesus.**

The King of Kings is Jesus.

He sits at the right hand of God the Father.

He rules over all creation.

And He is not a fool.

Jesus' power, his ways, and even his kingship look foolish to the world.

But it is wise.

1st Corinthians 1:27 reminds us that God chooses what is foolish in the eyes of the world.

The gospel itself is a stumbling block and folly.

We worship a crucified God.

We believe that our Salvation was purchased by his bloody death on a piece of wood.

We believe that he rose again from the dead.

We believe that he brought victory that set us free from sin and death forever.

We believe that his coming was the inauguration of the kingdom of God.

But the kingdom of God doesn't reveal itself in power and might and wonder like the kings of the world.

Instead, it's almost subversive.

The power of Jesus comes through love and service and faith.

We believe foolishly the Jesus is the only way we can experience eternal life.

We believe foolishly that we can't be good enough to gain it for ourselves that has to be given.

We believe the only way we can get that gift is by admitting that we don't deserve it.

The gospel is foolish to the world.

Jesus is very kingship looked foolish to the world.

Even his own disciples one of the king who conquered and who ruled through might and Power.

But not our King.

When he was crucified they mocked his kingship as if he was a fool and a Madman.

They draped real robes over him as a joke.

They gave him a crown of thorns because this fool couldn't possibly be a king.

And above his cross they wrote The Words king of the Jews.

Because they thought faith in Jesus was folly.

But Jesus has true wisdom.

In his wisdom brings Redemption.

By his blood he will reconcile all things to himself.

By his rule when he returns the land will no longer fall apart but will be made new.

In the soil no longer decay.

Drought will no longer ruin land.

Joel 2 Jesus will restore what the locusts have eaten.

Because the power of King Jesus is greater than any power in the universe.

And the destructive power of your Folly is no match for Jesus.

No matter how foolish you are you can find forgiveness and Redemption at the feet of Christ.

No matter how much of your life or the lives of others that you have destroyed you can find forgiveness In the Arms of Jesus.
No matter how deep your sin you can find Grace in the eyes of our Lord.

Jesus moves in and rebuilds our lives.
He repairs what is rotten and what is leaking.
He repairs the foundation.
He puts on a new roof and refinishes the floors.
He sanctifies us.

The gospel and our Jesus might seem foolish.
It might seem foolish to a world that is more impressed with well-curated videos with power or fame, or whatever can you shrink at the renovation of the day is.
The Jesus Christ the son of God Emmanuel Prince of Peace came to redeem fools.
fools like you and me.

So we all have a choice to make we can embrace the wisdom of the world which is folly
or we can embrace Jesus Christ in a foolish ancient faith.

Because a single drop of the blood of Jesus it's more than enough to take away all your sins.
So let us be fools who have been redeemed by Jesus.

CONCLUSION:

1. [Summary] Folly and foolish leaders are destructive. But Jesus can redeem every fool if we ask Him.
2. [Challenge] The power of your folly is no match for Jesus.