

Valuing True Wisdom

(Updated 5/2021; Dr. Baines, Jr.)

Read: Ecclesiastes 9:13 - 10:4

Summary Highlights: In vss. 13-16, the writer (perhaps Solomon) talks about how a small city was being attacked by a powerful king. A poor but wise man, in the small city, gave advice that led to the city being saved, even though the poor wise man was soon forgotten. The writer concludes that wisdom is better than strength, but a poor man's wisdom is despised - essentially forgotten.

In vss. 17-10:4, the writer continues with how quiet wise words are to be heeded more than foolish shouts. Wisdom is better than weapons of war and surely better than sin. A little folly is compared to how dead flies can mess up body oil or perfume. Wise people tend to live wise lives, while foolish people live foolish lives. Submission to a ruler's anger is urged.

Introduction: A key idea in today's lesson is that God's people should strive to live wisely. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to live wisely, as opposed to foolishly.

Applications:

1. Seek wisdom. Notice in vs. 16 that wisdom and wealth are not synonymous. In fact, some who are wealthy are foolish, and some who are poor are wise. Therefore, we should be careful about where we seek for wisdom. Notice in vs. 13 that the writer found wisdom in simply observing how a poor wise man saved a city, even though he was forgotten. Because there are times to fight and times to put our weapons down, there is a great need for wisdom, not simply those who do what we have been doing. *Let us seek wisdom wherever God may place it.* On one hand, we can miss it because we are not open to where God has sent it. And on the other hand, we can mistakenly assume that that which powerful people say is wise, when it may simply be foolishness.

2. Live wisely. Notice in vs. 15 that we do well to do that which is wise. There are some who know what to do but don't do it. We should remember that too whom much is given, much is required. The more we learn about God's will, specifically in Bible studies, preaching, and personal devotionals, the more God expects us to live by the wisdom found in such efforts. *Let's be people who live by wisdom.* Those selected as helpers in Acts 6:1-6 were known for being filled with or controlled by wisdom.

3. Substance over sound. Notice in vs. 17 that one can have low volume but great wisdom, while another can have great volume and so little substance. *Let's strive to be people of wisdom, not simply volume.* Substance is more important than sound. And by the same token, wisdom knows that it should flex to the listeners. If the listeners are addicted to loudness then sometimes "wisdom" must lift its voice. In our worship experience, there is a concern with singing something new. Wisdom says, we can sing something new, at a new pace, at a new volume, and even with new synonyms. But the lyrics must yet make sense according to the Word of God. /// And as we seek wisdom,

let's make sure we discern the difference between sound and substance. Wisdom is not only found in the quiet, nor only in the loud. We must listen to whatever is being said and compare it with God's word, so we can discern if this wisdom or not.

4. Sin's destructive power. Notice in Ecclesiastes 9:18 and 10:1 that in a short amount of time a little sin can destroy the good that has taken years, if not a lifetime to build. Many of us have heard about preachers and other leaders who were doing noteworthy works, but because of one or a few indiscretions (e.g., sexual sins, substance abuse, stealing money, etc.) their reputation and work was destroyed or scared. *Let's work on living godly lives, so our reputation and work for the Lord will not suffer from the destructive power of sin.* // Furthermore, let us be careful about killing a person's reputation and work because the person has sinned. We have all sinned. If we kill all the sinners, we will all be dead.

5. Character. Notice in vs. 2 that being a wise person helps one to live wisely, and being a foolish person helps one to live a foolish life. In other words, it is not enough to do one or two wise things. Living wisely needs to be a lifestyle. *Let's work on developing a character known for living wisely.* At the core of our wisdom are the matters of accepting Jesus as our Savior and demonstrating that He is our Lord by loving God, ourselves, and others.

6. Submission. Notice in vs. 4 that there is wisdom in trusting God with submission. In this text, the issue is learning to be submissive and dutiful, when those who have rule over you are angry. Abandoning your post or unnecessary words can simply make things worse. *Let's learn to trust God to rule those who have rule over us.* Obviously, when the leader is leading you contrary to God's word, you need to stay with God's word and suffer whatever the consequences may be.