

Ecclesiastes 9:11-10:15
February 9, 2022

III. Human Limits (6:10-12:8)

- A. No One Knows What Is Good (6:10-7:14)**
- B. Wisdom and Righteousness (7:15-29)**
- C. Even the Wise Do Not Know (8:1-17)**
- D. Enjoy Life Now (9:1-10)**
- E. Time and Chance (9:11-10:15)**

After concluding in the previous section that we should simply enjoy whatever the Lord has enabled us to enjoy, Solomon now begins the caveats, which we've come to expect. There's a lot of "yes... but..." back-and-forth in Ecclesiastes!

Our passage this morning is broken down into three sub-sections, each of which begin with Solomon *seeing* something *under the sun*. Wisdom is great, but it's also vulnerable to many errors or abuses.

I returned and saw under the sun... (9:11-12)

We might be tempted to think that wisdom is always going to yield a positive result; yet, we live *under the sun*, a phrase that Solomon uses quite often to describe life in a fallen world. In an ideal world, wisdom would produce a predicted and praised result. Instead, what seems like *chance* is the experience in this life (v. 11), up to and including our time of death (v. 12). Wisdom gives no apparent advantage!

This wisdom I have also seen under the sun... (9:13-10:4)

The next section begins with a parable of a wise man who has the skill and ability to thwart a powerful siege, and apparently does, but then is quickly forgotten. *Wisdom is better than strength* and it's *better than weapons of war* (vv. 16, 18), but it doesn't affect

the end result if it's neglected and set aside! Again, it would seem that wisdom gives no apparent advantage.

As we move into chapter ten, we see that it takes much effort and consistency to prove oneself wise, faithful, and trustworthy. Yet, reputations can be ruined and set aside with a single error. *A little folly is a foul odor even to one respected for wisdom and honor* (v. 1).

This is a call for us to continually rely on God's grace and the Holy Spirit's help. It only takes one sin to ruin our reputation. In leadership, this is particularly grievous. Forgiveness is on the table, but restoration may not be.

There is an evil I have seen under the sun... (10:5-15)

Solomon begins this third sub-section by considering the apparent contradiction in the position of the wise and foolish. Those who are foolish are *set in great dignity* and set upon *horses*, while those who deserve such an honor are *in a lowly place* and are made to *walk* (vv. 6-7). Is wisdom that desirable if it's not going to be acknowledged and honored?

It turns out wisdom is desirable. *Wisdom brings success* (v. 10). Yes, it's vulnerable to errors or abuses. No, it may not always bring about an expected outcome *under the sun*; but at the end of it all, wisdom is always the better way to go. Wisdom that relies on God, and points to Him, and is a means to godliness, is always better. After all, *the lips of a fool shall swallow him up and a fool multiplies words* (vv. 12, 14). Those who have the least to say often have the most to say!

We shouldn't expect things to make sense in the world *under the sun*. It is subject to sin, after all. Nevertheless, pursuing wisdom for the sake of righteousness is always the right call (cf. the proverb in v. 10).