

## 12. The Ruinous Rejection of Wisdom

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[ 0 : 00 ] And this long section really is all about the ruinous rejection of wisdom.

As mortal human beings living in a passing world, there are things that we simply must come to terms with, aren't there? If we're to learn to be at peace with ourselves and with the world. If we're not to let our experience of life embitter us and rob us of the many real joys that God has blessed us with for life on planet earth.

And we've seen that in these last two chapters of Ecclesiastes. The way to a shining face in life, not to the hardened and bitter face. And we've seen that it really is a way of liberation, isn't it? When we recognize that, as chapter 9 verse 1 says, all is in the sovereign hand of God. And when we can therefore be content to let God be God, not for us to try to be God ourselves.

[ 1 : 10 ] And for us therefore to be freed from all anxiety and anger. To really be enabled to live under God's gracious hand as he wants us to live.

Then we can take verses 7 to 10 of chapter 9 seriously, can't we? We can be released to find joy in our refreshment, as we said last time. The delights of everyday life, food and drink.

We can be freed to rejoice in life's relationships. Especially, as he says, the close relationship of marriage. And in life's responsibilities. Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. It's when our eyes are truly tuned in to the supreme reality above the sun. The mysteries of a transcendent God, of his wisdom and his ways.

Then, and really only then, can we find a right perspective on life under the sun. With all its mysteries, with all its perplexities.

[ 2 : 13 ] That's the way to liberation in life. But, of course, the preacher in Ecclesiastes never lets us veer very far towards triumphalism, does he?

So, he's frequently urging us to see the positive joy of life that's real and that's meant to be our experience under God. And yet, because he's a supreme realist, he's always so aware of our danger of running away with ourselves.

With self-delusion. And so, he's always bringing us back to earth with a bump. Lest that we can think that we can ever say, Ah, yes, now I've got it sorted.

Now I've got it cracked. I can really get control of my life after all. No, you can't, he says. That's precisely why you need to keep living daily with real godly wisdom.

It's just another way of saying living by constant trust in the word of God's revelation. Because that is what wisdom is in the Bible. Keep living like that in the midst of the mysteries and the snares of life in a fallen world.

[ 3 : 23 ] Which will always be a mysterious and a baffling world. And that's exactly the emphasis in our passage today, isn't it?

It's the need for ongoing trust in God's revealed wisdom. If we're not to be floored by the folly of a world that is adrift from God. And from our own hearts, which naturally also are constantly adrift from God.

We simply must never underestimate the power of human folly. That is, of rejection of God's wisdom and truth. To bring our lives to ridicule.

And ultimately to ruin. And if you're a new Christian especially, you need to hear this message so carefully. Because it's easy to think when you find faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It's easy to think you've found the answer. I've got the answer now. And life's going to be so much simpler. It's going to be so much easier. Well, I'm afraid, friends, that is a real mistake.

[ 4 : 27 ] You have, of course, found the answer. The ultimate answer. Of course you have. But your life, and the Christian life, is not going to be as simple and straightforward as you might think.

Certainly as you might like. Of course, that goes for all of us. Not just new Christians. The preacher has absolutely no time, does he, for what we might call the simple gospel.

If by that we mean the life is going to be simple. Like ABC as soon as you become a Christian. Not one bit of it. In fact, it's quite the reverse, isn't it? Just because of what we've seen in the last two weeks.

That we have to take account both of the transcendence of God. There's always going to be mystery about life. And also the real tragedy of sin. There's always going to be mess in this world. So you see, in verses 11 and 12, the first ones that we read today of chapter 9, the preacher reminds us forcibly about the facts as they really are.

[ 5 : 28 ] Life is not simple. It will always be complex. It will always be full of total unpredictabilities. And we have to recognize that. We have to accept it. The race is not to the swift, verse 11.

Nor the battle to the strong. Nor bread to the wise. Nor riches to the intelligent. Nor favor to those with knowledge. But time and chance. Time and circumstances better.

Events. They affect us all just the same, don't they? Who can make sense of it? The reality is we're just caught up in that kind of life whether we like it or not.

And we must all face up to the predictable ravages of time. As well as the unpredictable events that life can suddenly and unexpectedly thrust up at us.

That's just reality, isn't it? Verse 12 says we're simply not masters of our own destiny. We're not in control of everything that goes around us. We just never know when calamity is going to face us, for example.

[ 6 : 30 ] Some sudden event will pounce on us and catch us in a net. Just like a fish or a bird caught in a trap in a net. We just don't know our time.

Things like that come out of the blue, don't they? We can't plan for them always. We can't plan life down to the last detail. Suddenly something happens and your job is suddenly moved to another city or another country.

Or else perhaps your job is taken away altogether. Or you're suddenly struck with some illness or some disability that you never expected to hit you. Or perhaps it's just some quite innocent thing that happens to you.

But it suddenly turns the whole course of your future plans around 180 degrees and everything's thrown into confusion. Well, that's just life, isn't it? It's the way it is.

And that's why we need wisdom constantly from God so that we aren't unbalanced, so that we aren't floored, so that we aren't left floundering in life.

[ 7 : 31 ] God's revealed wisdom is like an anchor, as the old hymn says. It holds us firm and sure in the storms of life. Because those storms sometimes blow up so quickly and cause such havoc, don't they?

It keeps us because it keeps us anchored in the bigger reality, in the greater truth, in the world above and beyond this earthly realm.

And so it helps us, therefore, to see this world with all its complexities, to see it from an eternal perspective. And that, above all, is what we need, isn't it, in the midst of the snares and the nets of life here in this fallen world, here under the sun?

However great those nets may seem, that's what we need. That's the point of this little parable, isn't it, in verses 13 to 15. Do you see it there? A little beleaguered city facing a huge, mighty siege work, literally nets of a great king's army.

But the answer isn't in the might of man. The answer is in the wisdom of somebody who seems, well, just insignificant and foolish to the world. And yet his wisdom of the poor man saved the city.

[ 8 : 47 ] It's a great biblical theme, that, isn't it? The foolishness of God is wiser than men. The wisdom of God is stronger than men. You see, we're so slow to accept that, aren't we?

See the end of verse 15? No one remembered that poor man. And that's a great truth, isn't it? It's a tragic truth. God's wisdom is of supreme value in the complex mess of this world's unpredictability and challenges.

And yet so often, isn't it true, it is supremely unvalued. Why? Well, just because it is God's wisdom, not man's wisdom.

And the human heart is programmed against that at its deepest level, isn't it? That's why verse 16, wisdom is despised. His words are not heard. We're fools.

We reject wisdom not because we are intellectually deficient, but because we're morally deficient, because we're sinful. You see, folly in the Bible is not about intellectual handicap.

[ 9 : 52 ] Folly in the Bible is a moral choice to reject the truth of God about life, about eternity, about everything. That's why there's the parallelism in verse 18 of chapter 9 and the first verse of chapter 10 that we mention to the children.

One sinner destroys much good. So, a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor. That's why there's the key to understanding all of this here.

The preacher, you see, is saying that true wisdom alone is what will deliver you amidst the unpredictable snares and complexities of life. But it's axiomatic for him that true wisdom means the revelation of reality that comes from God above.

The fear of the Lord is the very beginning of wisdom. That's why back in chapter 5, he says, You draw near to the house of God to listen to Him. God is the one you must fear.

That's where you find wisdom. You see, he's talking about a world view, a whole understanding of the world that comes uniquely from God Himself. It's God's truth.

[ 11 : 02 ] It's God's Word that teaches us how to live, that teaches us what's right and what's wrong, what's wise and what's foolish. And so, it's God's moral order that we must pay heed to if we're going to negotiate life with a right sense of values about everything in life.

That's why Solomon, do you remember? The beginning of his reign, prayed to God for wisdom. You can read it in 1 Kings 3, verse 9. Give your servant an understanding mind, he says, that I may discern between good and evil.

That's the wisdom that protects during life. It protects those who see the sun. Remember, as chapter 7, verse 11 put it. That's the wisdom that preserves, ultimately, also the life of him who has it.

Because it's the wisdom of true faith. It's a real submission to the authority of Almighty God, to His Word, to His ways, including His way of ordering our lives here on planet Earth.

And yet, so often, it's verse 17 that's true, isn't it? The words of the wise are heard in quiet.

[ 12 : 17 ] But it's the shouting of the ruler among fools that drowns it out. Often, God's wisdom is howled down, isn't it?

By the shouts of those who will not listen for a moment to God's revelation of truth and life. Who can't tolerate even the sound of something that threatens our self-rule, our self-assertion, our rebellious humanity.

Who knows better? Just let me give you one example. Just think, I was reading yesterday in the paper about the G8 Summit and about something about HIV and AIDS.

Now, of course, as a public health issue, HIV and AIDS is very, very complex, as well as being very tragic. And I don't want to simplify it. But just to make this one obvious point.

There is a wisdom from God, is there not, that protects against this terrible snare. It's God's ordained purpose for human sexuality that sexuality should be expressed within a lifelong monogamous union.

[ 13 : 21 ] And that is a sure protection against that and against many, many other similar things.

And yet, even when there is a hint of a mention of something like that, even a suggestion that these things should perhaps be spoken of as part, even, of a preventive program, there is a clamor of derision that is absolutely deafening in the press and in the politics.

And so, similarly, sex education in the United Kingdom utterly scorns any sense of teaching about sexual abstinence. And has absolutely no part to play.

And even to suggest it, cries shame. And that's despite the fact that everybody acknowledges that our sexual education for young people has been an abject failure.

We're the worst in Europe. We have rocketing teenage pregnancies, rocketing teenage abortion rates, and rocketing sexually transmitted diseases among teenagers. But, you see, says the preacher in verse 16, wisdom is better than might, even when it's despised, even when it's unheard. Because it is God's wisdom for his world. And therefore, we reject it at our peril. Unless that's what we often do, isn't it? Because we are so programmed, we're so hardwired in our human nature for folly, for unwisdom, for rejection of God.

[ 14 : 51 ] As chapter 9, verse 3 puts it, the heart of man is full of evil. Or verse 13 of chapter 10, the end of his talk is evil madness for the fool.

You see, it's not an intellectual failing, it's a moral one, it's evil, it's spiritual. Paul says in Romans chapter 1, just the same, we suppress the truth in our wickedness.

Well, where does it all lead when we behave like that? That's what the preacher lays before us here in these verses, in very practical ways in the issues of life. He lays before us the comparison of wisdom and folly, of heeding God's truth, and of ignoring it and rejecting it.

And it's all about hearing God's words of wisdom and speaking his words of wisdom. That is what will be our only protection in life, he says.

From both ridicule, amid the snares of an unpredictable fallen world, and ultimately ruin, amid the snares of our all too predictable fallen human hearts.

[ 15 : 59 ] chapter 9, verse 17, you'll see begins a section about folly and not hearing the words of wisdom. And then chapter 10, verse 12 begins a section about the folly of not speaking words of wisdom.

So let's look first at verses 17 of chapter 9 through to chapter 10, verse 11. And although the connections aren't necessarily very easy to see and very obvious, I think the overall message of this section is very clear.

What he's saying is, refuse God's wisdom and our fallen world will ridicule us. It will make fools of us across the board in the end in things that really matter.

That is, it's only listening to and heeding God's revealed wisdom that will really protect us amid all the unpredictable snares of a fallen world. But rejection of God's wisdom and his ways, well, it will lead us to ridicule.

Life in the end will show us to be fools. Now, right at the outset, the preacher acknowledges that this is counterintuitive in our world. God's wisdom, he says in verse 17, is not heard, it's not valued.

[ 17 : 12 ] It's shouted down in high places by the rulers, by the opinion formers of our society. And it's counterintuitive because we, by nature, are not wise.

Again, as Paul says in Romans 1, our foolish hearts are darkened. Everything is stacked against us really listening to God's wisdom. That's why he says in verse 18, one sinner destroys much good.

Verse 1, one nasty fly in the ointment outweighs honor and wisdom. That is, it devalues it. It makes it easy to ignore. As one scholar puts it, it's much easier to create a stink than create sweetness.

And that's true for us humans, isn't it? And it's easy to pervert God's true wisdom and make of it a parody that looks foolish and then can so easily be rejected.

And alas, that too so often happens when Christians deal only superficially with God's word. And when they end up with a half-truth and a half-a-gospel, something that has a form, a veneer of godliness, but actually has no power.

[ 18 : 23 ] That's what the preachers are so against in Ecclesiastes. And that's why the church so often is in a mess in the West today, isn't it? Because we've dealt only superficially and trivially with God's word.

But where the true wisdom of God is, where His whole revelation that's able to make us wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, where that is heard, where it's understood, where it's applied, where it's taken to heart, however quiet, however unobtrusive and unimpressive it is, there is something far, far better than all the power and might of man.

Because the hearer of God's wisdom has a real and a realistic view of life with all its snares and dangers, both of our fallen world and of our own fallen human hearts.

And therefore, we're able to guard against all these with humility and with faith, whereas the fool and the foolish Christian too, who lives with naive optimism, well, that will just be their undoing in the end.

We know that. And the preacher is just showing us here in these verses how that's seen in some of the very basic things of life. The fool, the one who won't see that he needs to hear and heed and digest all of God's revelation about life, he'll be lacking in so many of the very basic areas of life.

[ 19 : 53 ] First, you see there in verses 2 and 3, he lacks the basic attitude that will protect him on life's varied and unpredictable road. Wise man's heart inclines him to the right, but a fool's heart to the left.

Even when the fool walks on the road, he lacks sense. He says to everyone that he's a fool. Now, there's no political bias here in verse 2 in the writer's mind, I don't think.

You can make up your own mind about that. But what he's saying is clear. Everything stems from our hearts, doesn't it? And the heart of the wise is literally at his right hand, at the place of strength,

at the place of spiritual competence in the ancient way of thinking.

The right hand is the hand of strength, the left hand is the weak hand. Whereas the fool, because he ignores God's revelation, his heart naturally inclines him to the left, to foolishness, to folly. And in the end, you see, he's saying, you can't hide that. It'll out in countless ways in the story of his life, along the road of life. It'll broadcast his lack of moral wisdom to the world.

[ 21 : 05 ] He'll bring ridicule upon himself because his basic attitude to life is wrong. By contrast, the one who who heeds the wisdom of God has a moral compass.

He has a spiritual compass that leads him steadily and steadfastly down the road of life. One obvious place that that can be seen is in what he turns to in the next few verses, verses 4 to 7. You see, the fool who rejects God's wisdom lacks the acceptance that protects you from the reality of life's varied and unpredictable rulers. See, the fool can't handle the reality of authority in his life, especially when it's incompetent authority or unjust authority.

And so often, that's the reality of life, isn't it? Remember chapter 8, man has power over man to his hurt. Well, here it is again, verses 5 to 7. Speak about that. Idiots in high places while at the same time the worthy ones are overlooked.

They're in low places. Well, that's life, isn't it? At every level, it seems to us like that so much of the time. Have you ever met anybody who seriously thinks that he wouldn't make a much, much better job of his boss's job than his boss does?

[ 22 : 25 ] Well, we all think we know better, don't we? We're always seeing folly in high places. But you see, life is like that in an unpredictable world. It's not the battle to the strong.

It's not favor to those with knowledge. It just isn't like that in real life. And it's very annoying. Isn't it annoying? Maybe for you, you just feel that the government is just a total disaster.

How can these fools be in charge? Well, are you going to let that sort of thing eat up your life and make you bitter and hard? Maybe you feel, maybe with some justification, that your boss is totally unreasonable.

Well, are you going to storm out in the huff every time he gets crossed with you? That's what verse 4 is about. Will you leave your place? Will you resign your job just like that? Or are you going to accept the reality of God's revelation about this fallen world?

It's one of unfairness. It's one of unpredictability because of our sin. And are you going to exhibit the calm acceptance of reality that knows that the world is like that, but it also knows that justice will come?

[ 23 : 40 ] And will certainly come ultimately in the end when Jesus comes. But therefore, accept that in the meantime there's going to be all sorts of things that we have to put up with.

And accept Jesus' word. Blessed are the peacemakers, not the war makers. Very important, isn't it? It affects so many of the areas of our life. Some of us as Christians can be very, very super sensitive, can't we?

And we so easily bring ridicule on ourselves by getting into a huff, by storming out just when somebody says something to us. Maybe somebody says something against us or something that we perceive to be against us or any sort of little criticism.

And we storm off in the huff. Make a fool of yourself. Some of us like to believe well, we're just very sensitive personalities. Often, when we're very sensitive, the reality is we're actually just very proud, aren't we?

We don't like somebody else criticizing us. And sometimes people will criticize us and you know that they're a fool. Well, can you accept that?

[ 24 : 50 ] Wisdom says be humble. You live under the mighty hand of God. Don't let folly ridicule you. Wisdom gives a control on our daily life.

It learns to accept the world as it is and to contain ourselves. Ignoring God's wisdom also denies us the aptitude that protects us through life's varied and unpredictable risks as well.

Again, these things can lay us open to ridicule in life's way. That's really the point of verses 8 to 11, surely. See, the one whose life is solidly grounded in God's revelation is someone whose whole approach to life is going to be balanced.

It's going to be steady and therefore it's going to be genuinely fruitful in the ultimate sense. You see, verse 10, wisdom helps one to succeed, that is, to find gain, to find lasting profit.

That's the thing that's been so elusive all the way through this book, isn't it? Where is profit? Where is gain to be found? Well, you see, wisdom can negotiate life so as to find that gain.

[ 25 : 57 ] He knows, verse 8, that pursuing wrong actions that's pictured here won't bring lasting profit. Rather, it'll rebound on you in the end. You dig a pit to trap somebody to hurt them.

Well, you'll be hurt yourself. Such a common phrase in the Psalms, isn't it, for just retribution. If you try and break through a wall in order to steal something, well, you'll very likely get bitten by a serpent.

Just like our proverb, you play with fire, you'll get burnt. Maybe not in the short term, of course. And we know that the wicked can prosper. They can seem to abound. That's been one of the enigmas of this book.

But the wise man knows that in the end, it will not go well with the wicked because he knows the very last verse of this book. In the end, God will judge every deed.

So he won't be ensnared in life like that. He'll also be wise to the reality of verse 9. And even honest work can bring risks.

[ 27 : 03 ] If you quarry stones, if you split logs, well, you can get hurt in that too. And so he'll be prepared for that. He won't shun labor. No, he's wise about it. Neither will he be over hasty.

You see, that's the point of verse 10, isn't it? Dashing in with a blunt axe and exhausting yourself. No, on the other hand, he won't be too overcautious either so that he'll never ever get started doing anything and never get onto the thing because he's preparing so much.

That's the joke, really, of verse 11, isn't it? It's comic. The snake charmer is so slow to actually begin the charming, then the snake comes out of the box and bites his audience.

Well, nobody's going to put money in his hat if that happens, are they? See, the sense of balance balance and roundedness of wisdom is so important in spiritual life, isn't it?

Some Christians are just dead keen to get on and do things and go places and they go at it like crazy. But they're going at it like a blunt axe to make life so hard for themselves when little wisdom would help them to prepare and be wise and make the task so much easier.

[ 28 : 16 ] That's the wisdom, isn't it, that comes from wise biblical reflection. It saves us from so much angst. It's the same in choosing people for areas of service, isn't it?

Paul says to Timothy in 1 Timothy 5, don't be hasty laying on hands. Don't get yourself into trouble because you rush out and you get the first person who looks right and you put them in a job. It can rebound on you.

But you see, the converse is sometimes also the case, isn't it? Some Christians, some churches are so slow, so overcautious, are so afraid to ever put a foot wrong that they never actually do anything.

There's no advantage. In fact, worse, the advantage can turn to ruin. It can be the exact opposite, like the snake coming out and biting you. We can make fools of ourselves.

We're ridiculous because we achieve nothing. These are just a few little pictures that the preacher gives us, but they're very telling, aren't they? Life is full of unpredictable snares and traps that face us all.

[ 29 : 21 ] All kinds of things that we have to deal with. And we will only deal with them properly if we pay heed to the words of wisdom, to the words of the truth of God in all their roundedness, in all their balance, in all their stability.

If we allow the whole of God's revelation to shape us, to shape our whole view of the world, our understanding of life, with absolute realism, so that we are completely real about God and man, about heaven and earth, about time and eternity, about right and wrong, about wisdom and folly. Refuse God's wisdom and our fallen world will make a fool of your life. It will hold us up to ridicule in the end. But of course, the reality is that what you listen to will also lead, won't it, to what you speak. The character of what you build your life on will shape the character of what you forge your life to be. In other words, what you take in will be what you put out. And that's what verses 12 to 20 seem to be all about.

Verse 12, the words of a wise man's mouth are grace. They win him favor, but the lips of a fool consume him. See, it's not just the danger of ridicule he's speaking about.

[ 30 : 46 ] In the end, it's all about ruin. Reject God's wisdom and our fallen nature will ruin us in the end. It's only speaking God's words of wisdom that will protect us and others from the very predictable snares of our fallen human nature.

Left to ourself, well, the foolishness of our natural hearts will propel us headlong into ruin. And the preacher says that this is absolutely true both on a personal level and on a public level.

See, verses 13 to 15 speak of the path of personal folly, don't they? The speaking of somebody whose philosophy of life is dangerously adrift.

It may seem early on that it's just silly. You see, verse 13, verse 14. The beginning of his words are foolishness. Well, he's frivolous, he's lightweight, his devil may care in his attitude to life.

Views of morals and ethics, they may seem very progressive, they may seem very liberal, they may seem very with it, but in the end, the end of his talk says the preacher is evil madness.

[ 32 : 00 ] That's a common enough story too, isn't it? Maybe that somebody is brought up with the knowledge of wisdom, of God's truth, but they reject it. I know better than that.

And they go off and they live a life of gay abandon with totally different values, but in the end, very, very often, doesn't it end up in a very dark place? Jesus told a story about someone exactly like that, didn't he, in the parable in Luke 15, the man who went to the far country.

But you see, the problem is universal, isn't it? in verse 14. He is a man who spouts words. He's very confident. He thinks he's in control of his life.

He multiplies words. He can't stop telling you exactly how he's got his life absolutely sussed out. And yet, it's sheer fantasy. No one knows what it's to be.

No one can think they've got life taped just like that. See, there are people who are so self-assured, so self-confident, and so very wearisome, aren't they? Especially, if they call themselves Christians.

[ 33 : 09 ] They can't stop telling you where you are going wrong with your life, or where your church is going wrong, what you need to do to sort it all out. The fool multiplies words. Oh, you've met plenty of people like that?

So have I. Often reminds me of what Winston Churchill gave as a definition of a fanatic, someone who can't change their mind and won't change a subject. And it's very wearisome.

But in the end, you see, says verse 15, it becomes wearisome even to the fool himself. Because they're shown up, ultimately, to be totally lacking in the reality department.

For all their fine words, he says, they can't find a way to the city. In other words, they're utterly useless even for the basic things of life. And so often, that is true, isn't it? You read it in the papers. People who are fettered as being at the cutting edge of opinion, whose words we should all listen to. So often, when you dig below the surface, their personal lives, their ordinary lives, are in a state of utter ruin.

[ 34 : 14 ] They're a total shambles. Can't find the way to the city. Somebody was telling me just this week, they were speaking to a lawyer who was very fed up with the fact that they were presenting a case before a judge.

And this particular judge had just gone through in very quick succession three disastrous marriages, one after another. And quite rightly, this lawyer was saying, I have major doubts about this man's ability to make good judgments.

Fairly disastrous in a judge, wouldn't you think? But you see, as Christians too, we need to be careful, don't we? With the things that we say and spite to others.

There's nothing worse than a Christian who's got lots of pious sounding words telling us all how things really ought to be and how we can do it too. And yet, who are exposed by the lack of deeds in things that actually count in the down-to-earth reality of real life living.

You know, the sort of person who's endlessly telling you about the thing God is doing in their life when you have them around for Sunday lunch. They hog the conversation and nobody else gets a word in.

[ 35 : 21 ] And yet, they're the one who hasn't got the faintest idea of how to get around the corner to the kitchen to help with washing up. Can't find their way to the city. Be careful.

Our fallen nature propels us so easily into ruin, doesn't it? The lips of a fool consume him. They ruin him. And unless we are hearers constantly, all the time, of God's true wisdom in all its fullness, we won't win favor by our testimony, will we?

Folly in personal life. But the same, says the preacher, is true in public life. That's what verses 16 to 20 speak of, don't they? Woe to any society when their rulers are children.

That is, they're foolish, they're immature, they're juvenile in their understanding of the issues that are of real importance in life. They're so upside down in their priorities that they feast in the morning and therefore are drunk and incapable of any sensible government.

Well, of course, in a democracy, we don't have any excuses, do we? We vote for our leaders. We get the leaders we vote for and the leaders, I guess, that we deserve. Verses 18 and 19 are a

picture of many in modern culture today, aren't they?

[ 36 : 39 ] A society that thinks it knows everything, inspired by its own rhetoric, all the arrogance of immaturity and superficiality. Verse 19 literally says, for laughter they prepare food and wine that brings joy to the living and money answers both.

Money meets the need of both. See, our preacher is not an ascetic. He's constantly telling us to enjoy all God's good gifts. But you see, here he's speaking about a society that lives for hedonism alone, that lives in denial about reality.

Especially the reality of the sinfulness of the human heart. And therefore, it casts off gaily the restraints of the so-called forces of conservatism in the past.

But you see, a society that does that, when in fact, the values and beliefs that it's casting off belong to a time when in fact God's wisdom and his word of truth and his righteousness was much more heeded than it is now, a society that does that and casts off these things shouldn't be surprised when before too long the roof caves in and everybody in the house gets drenched by the shocking elements of reality.

It's just so obvious, isn't it? Ignore the reality that this is a moral universe and the edifice of civilized society is held up by the restraining walls of God's wisdom and his truth.

[ 38 : 14 ] Ignore those, erode those, even attack and rupture those and we'll find pretty soon that the roof falls in, won't we? in the parts of society that we do still like and we do still cherish well they collapse also along with those parts that we've thrown away because we thought they were passé and they were old and just in as in personal life so it is in public life it's the words of true wisdom that are grace and life and bring health and righteousness in any society but the lips of fools who live with a fantasy of their own ability to control and predict life well that leads only to ruin doesn't it?

And alas we see that all around us so much in our post-Christian Western world well what's the answer? What's the response for the wise believer faced as we are with life's unpredictability and its unfairness and so often with public folly and with immaturity and with rejection of the true wisdom of God in the world?

Well what's the answer? Well not joining in and let our lips consume us and bring us to ruin See verse 20 is very practical advice isn't it?

Don't become Mr. Angry he's saying letting it all get to you so that you also become a cursor even in secret even in your heart in the bedroom Don't do that for one thing it's impossible isn't it to hide an angry heart gives you a hard face doesn't it?

Remember? And anyway he says a little bird will always betray your secrets but for another thing we don't need to be defensive do we?

[ 40 : 06 ] We know that God's wisdom and His way is better even though it's despised in all the world We know that the words of the wise heeded and quiet are better than the clamor of rulers among fools don't we?

And we know that the wise words of God when spoken with wisdom do win favor their grace and people respond So what do we do?

We trust in the wisdom of God don't we? Even if it is apparently unheard and unheeded We hear His words We accept His words We live His words We speak His words And that's the only way to keep our personal lives from ridicule and the traps and the snares of this fallen world and the traps and the snares of our fallen hearts And also it's the only way that our public life will be kept from ridicule and ruin and collapse ultimately and the roof falling in So let's pray for us and for our public servants too the prayer of Solomon give us give us understanding minds O Lord that we also may discern between good and evil wisdom and folly in the government of our own lives and also in the government of our nation

That would be a good prayer to pray wouldn't it? Well let's pray together now It's oh let's Banks obtenn T because initially it looks so in your mind d