

When Life Gets Twisted: Finding Meaning in the Absurdity of Life
The Paradox of Leadership
Jerry Cisar — July 26, 2020

Text: Ecclesiastes 9:13—10:20 Keyword: Wisdom

Introduction

Iain Provan: “At the heart of human existence there is a ‘madness’ that leads us to value what we should not and to despise what is truly valuable. The human tragedy is that we are incapable even of enlightened self-interest, much less the disinterested love of God or neighbor.”

LIVE THE STORY

*The Gospel is intended to be learned and lived in community.
The following questions are designed for use in our Community Groups as an aid to growth in the Gospel and Community.*

- In the Iain Provan quote, what do you think it is that people tend to value that they should not, and despise that is truly valuable?
- Why might the story in 9:13-18 be a strong messianic reference? How did Jesus fulfill this? How are we called to fulfill it?
- What are the tendencies that people have toward leadership? How should we think about these tendencies?
- What do you think of the paradox that even though wisdom is better than might, one sinner can destroy much of the good which wisdom has accomplished? Does this surprise you? ... fit your experience?
- What are some of the NT texts that speak about this paradox of leadership?
- Why might it be important for the church to remember that we are not in a scrimmage but the real game in which “hitting is fair and expected”?
- How did this message and text speak to you in your discipleship?

I. Wisdom is Better than Might (9:13-18)

- A. The Preacher begins with a story.
- B. Who is this poor but wise man from an insignificant city who is willing to save his people, his insignificant people, and yet be despised and forgotten?
 - i. 1 Corinthians 1:18-19, 25-29
 - ii. Not only was Jesus the poor and wise man, we too are called as the poor who are to embrace the same wisdom so that through us God will nullify the wisdom of the world.
 - iii. Believers should find themselves in the same place as this poor and wise man. We cannot be concerned with whether we are remembered or whether we are despised.

II. One Sinner Destroys Much Good (10:1-7)

- A. Wisdom may be better than might, but a fly can spoil it all. (1-4)

- B. This is an evil under the sun (5-7).
 - i. Because of the destructive power of folly, we live in a world in which folly can rule on a throne and the right rulers have no power.

 - ii. Even though wisdom, especially the wisdom of the Christ, is more powerful than the might of this world, God has not removed folly from our lives.
 - a) None of us are exempt from becoming fools.
 - b) Paul warned against this reality in the churches.

Zack Eswine: "God does not remove foolish leaders from our lives. Nor does he give us immunity from becoming foolish in our leadership."

III. Navigating the Paradox (8-20)

- A. "Accidents of Life" (8-11)
 - i. In the context of talking about wise vs. foolish leaders, the overall direction is clear.
 - a) Is it a call for resistance, for biting back!

 - b) Is it confidence in Providence? Maybe.
 - ii. Paul alludes to a pit that can be fallen into by both a leader and those who oppose that leader (2 Tim. 2:23-26).
 - iii. Leaders need to apply the wisdom of Prov. 26:4-5.

B. A Need for Discernment (12-15)

- i. A call for discernment

 - ii. "The human tragedy is that we are incapable even of enlightened self-interest, much less the disinterested love of God or neighbor."
- C. Foolish Leaders and What You Think (10:16-20)

TCOT: "A hilarious sketch of lazy people who court disaster by energetically distracting themselves from their responsibilities with frivolous pursuits leads to an insincere prohibition against criticizing such people, in the very act of doing so."

- D. Wisdom is better than might yet one sinner can destroy much good, and we have to be discerning to navigate the paradox.

Conclusion

- A. This discernment can only be given by the Holy Spirit.
 - i. Ephesians 1:17
 - ii. Colossians 1:9-10
 - iii. Philippians 1:9-11

- B. This is no scrimmage!