

Ecclesiastes 10:1-4

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/eccl/eccl-10/ecclesiastes-101-4/>

Foolishness is the opposite of wisdom and its effects/consequences are readily apparent. A little foolishness can poison a lot of wisdom. Wisdom requires making choices to act in ways that avoid emotional reactions.

A small corrupting agent (*dead flies*) can spoil a large amount of something pleasant (*make a perfumer's oil stink*). In the same manner, *a little foolishness* can negate *wisdom* and *honor*. This parable is similar to Jesus using the illustration of leaven to describe evil. As only a little yeast is needed to cause a big loaf of bread to rise, a little evil corrupts a community ([Matt 16:6](#)). This is also similar to Solomon's statement at the end of Chapter 9, "one sinner destroys much good."

Foolishness is the opposite of *wisdom*. While a *wise man's heart* directs him toward the right, the *foolish man's heart* directs him toward the left. The choices made by a *foolish man* are the opposite of choices made by a *wise man*. Their *heart* leads each man in opposite directions. That means the wise and foolish have opposing perspectives and opposing objectives.

Everyone has an innate sense that allows them to discern the difference between wisdom and foolishness. It is obvious. It is what we might call "common sense." In fact, *even when the fool walks along the road, his sense is lacking and he demonstrates to everyone that he is a fool*. However, people might not openly acknowledge the *foolishness* that is readily apparent. This might be another way a small amount of *foolishness* can pollute a large amount of common sense.

The fool cannot escape his foolishness. He *demonstrates it* (literally "says it") everywhere he goes. And as he drifts further to *the left* (away from *the right*), the more evident it becomes, even leading to the madness and evil outlined throughout Ecclesiastes.

When a *ruler's temper* rises against us, Solomon advises that we not *abandon our position, because composure allays great offenses*. The word translated *composure* is "marpe," which is often translated "health" or "remedy." The remedy for a *great offense* such as *temper* is *composure*. *Composure* requires remaining unfazed by surrounding circumstance.

The *temper* of a *ruler* directed toward us is dangerous. But the proper response is to avoid reacting. To remain calm and not retaliate. This is the remedy for a volatile situation.

The word translated *temper* is “ruwach,” which means “spirit” or “wind.” It is the same word used in the phrase “a chasing after the wind,” which serves as one of Solomon’s synonyms for “hebel” or vapor (see notes on [Ecclesiastes 1:2](#)). The *ruler’s temper* stems from his spirit pouring out in the form of emotion.

The response of *wisdom* requires a spirit of *composure*. There is no doubt that emotions would be heightened within any person toward whom the anger of a *ruler* is directed. But a part of *wisdom* is to listen to emotions and yet not allow them to direct our choices. *Wisdom* includes the power to make good choices even during an emotional situation.

Biblical Text:

¹Dead flies make a perfumer’s oil stink, so a little foolishness is weightier than wisdom and honor.²A wise man’s heart directs him toward the right, but the foolish man’s heart directs him toward the left.³Even when the fool walks along the road, his sense is lacking and he demonstrates to everyone that he is a fool.⁴If the ruler’s temper rises against you, do not abandon your position, because composure allays great offenses.