

Ecclesiastes 7:19-22

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Wisdom and prudence will save you some headaches, freeing you to rest, forgive, and adopt a healthy perspective.

Ten rulers in a city have a lot of strength. They have a diversity of skills, access to advisors, presumably the protection of an army, and (in the ancient world) fortified walls. Yet, they are less strengthened than the *wise man* who carries *wisdom* with him. In what way? Solomon explains in the next verse, beginning with *Indeed*.

The word *Indeed* is an interesting transitional word. It is the Hebrew word “kiy,” which means “because” or “as a result” or even “except.” So verse 20 is connected to verse 19 in a cause-and-effect relationship. *Wisdom strengthens a wise man more than ten rulers* because he understands that *there is no one who is perfectly righteous*. It takes *wisdom* to know this. Knowing that people are fallible *strengthens a wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city*. But how does that knowledge strengthen someone? The following verses provide insight. It allows the *wise man* to relax. To not take criticism too seriously. Give people slack. See things through the eyes of others. Make allowances for the weakness of others. Many disputes, even wars, begin because someone felt slighted and the offended party retaliated. With the *wisdom* of recognizing that we all say things we shouldn't say, we can let criticism roll off our back.

The *wise man* who understands people's weaknesses won't *take seriously all words which are spoken*. Everyone occasionally says things from a reactionary posture. Solomon might have a personal experience in mind. He says not to *take seriously all words which are spoken, so that you will not hear your servant cursing you*. Perhaps Solomon had to deal with an instance where he heard his *servant cursing* him. And he reasoned that he himself *likewise* has *many times cursed others*. The *servant* might be *cursing* his master because he is showing off. It might just be a way of blowing off steam. He might even mean it, but has no way to do anything about it. So why let it bother you?

It appears that the wisdom to avoid taking offense is the strength that is greater than the resources available to *ten rulers*. Taking offense is the root of

many great dangers. The New Testament tells us to “Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ” ([Galatians 6:2](#)). One of the burdens to be borne is to avoid taking offense at the words of others.

Biblical Text:

¹⁹ **Wisdom strengthens a wise man more than ten rulers who are in a city. ²⁰ Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.²¹ Also, do not take seriously all words which are spoken, so that you will not hear your servant cursing you.²² For you also have realized that you likewise have many times cursed others.**