

Ecclesiastes 9:17-18

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/eccl/eccl-9/ecclesiastes-917-18/>

Trying to control others through shouting and coercion is destructive while quiet words of wisdom are more powerful than weapons of war.

Solomon now tells us *the words of the wise heard in quietness are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools*. A ruler has positional authority. Someone who can yield coercive power over others. A ruler might use *shouting* to express their positional power. But Solomon makes it clear that positional power is an inferior form of power. What some call referent power is superior. Referent power is influence gained through respect.

The superior power Solomon advocates appears as *words heard in quietness*. Contrasting with the *shouting* of a ruler, the *words of the wise* are *heard* not because they are required to be *heard*, as with a ruler, but because those hearing the *words of the wise* recognize their benefit and choose to listen. Accordingly, those who hear the *words of the wise* are wise themselves. As opposed to the *fools* who are directed by the *shouting of a ruler*.

Solomon comments further on the *words of the wise* vs. the coercive power of the ruler. He asserts that *wisdom is better than weapons of war*. This is another way to assert that the referent power of the *words of the wise heard in quietness* is superior to coercive power.

However referent power is not always used for good. *One sinner destroys much good*. Just as the referent power of the *wise* can do much good, the referent power of the *sinner* can lead many astray. When people are led astray, their actions result in destruction. Romans, Chapter 1, tells us that when anyone chooses sin by following their own fleshly lusts, God “gave them over” to their own lusts, leading to destruction. This is called the “wrath of God” against unrighteousness.

Biblical Text:

¹⁷ The words of the wise heard in quietness are better than the shouting of a ruler among fools.¹⁸ Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.