

Commentary on Ecclesiastes 9:13-18 **By L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.**

The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Series*) for **Sunday, October 9, 2011**, is from **Ecclesiastes 9:13-18**. Five **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the [*Bible Lesson Commentary*](#) below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further**, which are also available on the [Bible Lesson Forum](#), will aid teachers in conducting class discussion.

Ecclesiastes 9:13-18

(Ecclesiastes 9:13) I have also seen this example of wisdom under the sun, and it seemed great to me.

The writer of Ecclesiastes, most probably King Solomon, truthfully told what he learned from experience, the teaching he received, and the study of the Scriptures. From his book, we can learn some experiences to avoid as well as some truths to believe and follow. His book provides both examples and teaching on what the righteous and wise will avoid and also do “under the sun,” or “in this life on Earth.” He wrote what he regarded as important as the Holy Spirit guided and inspired him; however, we need to be very careful before constructing any biblical doctrines from this book alone without consulting what the New Testament further reveals about God and reality, this life and the afterlife.

(Ecclesiastes 9:14) There was a little city with few people in it. A great king came against it and besieged it, building great siegeworks against it.

This example of wisdom reminds us of the parables of Jesus, Who often used parables to illustrate His teachings or encourage people to think, pray, and obey to discover their meaning. When thinking of “a little city with few people in it,” our church family, family, or life may seem very insignificant to us (remember, Jesus chose only 12 disciples and had few loyal followers, “a little city”) when compared to others, but we are not insignificant to God or to the great enemy of our souls (the devil). No matter how big or small we may be, we can experience the stress of huge problems and spiritual attacks that do not defeat us but can bring some insecurity and test our trust in God.

(Ecclesiastes 9:15) Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city. Yet no one remembered that poor man.

Too often, people judge the intelligence or quality of someone by their appearance, and they may wonder how a poor person can also be wise. Remember, when Jesus ministered on the earth, He was a poor wise man who had no place that He could call His own to lay His head. After His death and resurrection, He not

only delivered whole cities from the power of the devil and led individuals to saving faith through the evangelistic efforts of His disciples, but He continues to free from slavery to sin all those who trust in Him as Lord and Savior. Today, from all we see around us (in the media, in other places, and even in some churches), no one remembers Jesus and what He did and still does to save people from their sins and give them eternal life. Think also about what we have learned about God, Jesus, and the Bible from people we no longer remember. Though others, or even we ourselves, may seem poor in the eyes of the world, through prayerful study of the Bible and trust in Jesus Christ, they or we can learn truths that will deliver us from our spiritual enemies and our sins, and enable us to help others too.

(Ecclesiastes 9:16) So I said, “Wisdom is better than might; yet the poor man’s wisdom is despised, and his words are not heeded.”

Wisdom is better than might because wisdom can show people how best to use power and might. The crowds appreciated Jesus’ might: His power to work miracles, heal the sick, cast out demons, and raise the dead. Yet, most of the people, especially most of the religious leaders of His day, despised His wisdom and refused to heed His words. Unhappily, the same is true today in many places and among many who claim to follow God. The Bible is the best book ever written, a book full of saving truths revealed by God, but how

many despise, look down on, or scorn the Bible's teachings and refuse to heed the Bible's words!

(Ecclesiastes 9:17) The quiet words of the wise are more to be heeded than the shouting of a ruler among fools.

Wise people often do not draw attention to themselves but quietly obey God and serve others as God directs; therefore, some of the wisest people find themselves ignored. On the other hand, some try to manipulate or rule over others by drawing attention to themselves, sometimes by showmanship or shouting. The fool will often follow the biggest showman, while the wise will carefully consider and evaluate the message they hear from those who want to rule or aspire to leadership. Jesus taught quietly while the religious leaders and the crowds shouted "Crucify Him!" The fools in the crowd followed the leaders who shouted.

(Ecclesiastes 9:18) Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one bungler destroys much good.

Though weapons and war may be necessary, wise people will know how, when, and why to use them. Wise people will not misuse power and know how and when to make peace. "Sinner" is probably a better translation than "bungler," and most translations prefer the word "sinner" in this verse. A sinner is one who chooses to do wrong, who practices evil or is a

slave to evil habits. A bungler is one who may do wrong by accident and may be inept in some things. Both sinners and bunglers can destroy much good! Think of the good that was destroyed when Adam and Eve sinned! A stone thrown into a pond can make a big ripple!

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What does it mean to besiege a city? How might someone be spiritually besieged by someone, by temptations, and by evil powers?
2. How can Bible study, prayer, and trusting Jesus help a person defeat any spiritual siege-works against them?
3. Why do you think some people refuse to heed what the Bible teaches? What are some of the things that can happen to those around them and to those who turn away from God and His teachings in the Bible?
4. What type of people are many people today inclined to follow? Compare and contrast the qualities many look for in a leader today with the leadership qualities of Jesus Christ prior to His death on the cross.
5. If sinners destroy much good, what can those who trust in and follow Jesus do?

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