

Ecclesiastes 12:9-12

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9 Besides being wise, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge, weighing and studying and arranging many proverbs with great care.

10 The Preacher sought to find words of delight, and uprightly he wrote words of truth.

11 The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd.

12 My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

The first thing we see here is a commendation of the teacher whose wisdom is captured in Ecclesiastes (v9-10).

- What are some characteristics we see here that add weight to what we've been seeing in Ecclesiastes?

In verse 10, we have a picture that describes what these words in Ecclesiastes are meant to do. A goad is an old-school cattle prod with a sharp metal tip. The purpose of this tool was to motivate a stubborn animal to move by causing it pain or discomfort.

- In what ways has Ecclesiastes been a goad to us? How has it made you uncomfortable at times?

None of us like pain or discomfort, and we tend to resist change. We tend to fight or avoid such things, sometimes even stubbornly doubling down on our present course. But here we come to find out the one doing the "prodding" is none other than Jesus. These words aren't sourced in Solomon but in the one Shepherd who we clearly see is Jesus (see Ezekiel 34, 37, John 10)

- What kind of shepherd is Jesus (see Ps 23, John 10)?
- How should the fact that he is such a good shepherd change how we receive his “prodding”?
- How have you seen his faithful prodding in your life?

Not all pain is the prodding of the good shepherd. The prophecy of Jesus as the coming one shepherd in Ezekiel came on the heels of the condemnation of shepherds who prodded their sheep to the slaughter rather than green pastures. Verse 12 here warns us against heeding words that go beyond those that come from the good shepherd.

- How have you been hurt by chasing the worlds twists or alternatives to Jesus’ words in scripture?
- How about within Christianity - how have you been burdened by the when the words of Christ in scripture have been distorted, confused, or added to?
- As a church, how can relentlessly “guard the deposit entrusted to us”?

PRAYER

Pray that God would make us faithful to proclaim and trust what he has said alone, without addition or compromise.

Pray for each other, that we would learn to yield to the faithful prodding of Christ’s word to us in scripture.

- Cares - any burdens we can help carry?
- Confession - any sin that needs to be exposed to the light?
- Comfort - how have you seen the Lord’s care for you?