

**WISDOM FROM HEAVEN FOR LIFE ON EARTH - Practical Studies From Proverbs - Part three Teaching #1831 –  
Sunday, September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015 - 6:00 p.m.  
Pastor Don Horban - Cedarview Community Church, Newmarket, ON**

## THE PATH OF THE FOOL AND HOW TO KNOW IF YOU'RE ON IT

If the last two studies on the pattern and example of wisdom portray the lesson to follow, tonight's subject delineates the path to avoid at all costs. One of the wisest men, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, warns against the habits of the fool in the same way our world warns against climate change.

This whole subject is treated in Proverbs with a **"Don't let this happen to you!"** label attached. Mark the traits and path of the fool carefully if you want to please God and live the good life:

### 1) THE PRIMARY MARK OF THE FOOL IN PROVERBS IS GULLIBILITY

The most commonly translated word for the **fool** or the **simple** is the Hebrew word **"peti."** The verb formed by this word (to **fool** someone) is one we've already examined in last week's study - **Proverbs 1:10** - **"My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent."**

That word **entice** is the verb form from the very same Hebrew word, **peti**. Hence, the fool is a person who is easily enticed. He is easily pulled off course morally and spiritually.

This is an important point in establishing the foundation for the character of the fool in Proverbs. He isn't **stupid**. He is **weak**. He is far to **swayable** by others. He doesn't know how to pick the right company. He can't say no. He's shaped by **pressure** rather than by **conviction**. This is the fool's ruin.

This trait of **moral gullibility** is not some fringe characteristic of the fool. It is the **chief** defining trait of the way he lives. This is repeated over and over in reference to the fool in Proverbs:

**Proverbs 14:15** - **"The simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps."**

**Proverbs 22:3** - **"The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it."**

### 2) NOT ONLY IS THE FOOL GULLIBLE (FOR THAT PROBLEM COULD BE SOLVED WITH PATIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE), HE IS IN DEEPER TROUBLE STILL BECAUSE HE IS STUBBORN AND UNCORRECTABLE IN HIS WAYS

This is perhaps the saddest trait of all in the fool. His problem could be corrected if only he had the heart to listen to advice. But, right from the beginning of the book, we are shown this is not the case with the fool:

**Proverbs 1:7** - **"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction."**

Most of us know the first part of that wonderful verse. But the last part is equally important because the fear of the Lord doesn't fall down from heaven like the morning dew. We **learn** about the Lord and His ways from the blunt correction of **God's Word** or the beneficial advice **other wiser people**. But the fool will have none of this. He doesn't love advice. He hates it. Because of this, the fool will never acquire the fear of the Lord he so desperately needs.

This theme is so important it is treated over and over again for rememberable emphasis:

**Proverbs 10:8** - **"The wise of heart will receive commandments, but a babbling fool will come to ruin."**

Again, the heart of the wise is quiet and humble enough to listen. The fool, significantly, is described as a **babbling** person. The threat of solid truth always puts him on the run. He is already arguing so he won't have to listen and be confronted by the truth. What the fool is saying makes no sense. It's just **babble**. But it's enough filler noise to crowd out the entrance of wisdom.

**Proverbs 12:15** - **"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but a wise man listens to advice."**

Here is the ruin of the fool. He simply can't imagine he is wrong. So why would he have to listen to anyone else? And here we see the link between foolishness and **pride**. This is the road to ruin.

**Proverbs 15:5 - "A fool despises his father's instruction, but whoever heeds reproof is prudent."**

This is the same subject of foolishness bound up in the family setting. The fool who can't even listen to his own father will never be able to listen to anyone else - teachers, legal authorities, or God Himself.

3) **THE FOOL DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO MAKE AN APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO THE TRUTH HE SO DESPERATELY NEEDS**

He doesn't know what's important and what is not. He doesn't know how to **embrace** the way of life when it's laid out before him:

**Proverbs 29:9 - "If a wise man has an argument with a fool, the fool only rages and laughs, and there is no quiet."**

Notice again, **"there is no quiet."** Having nothing helpful to say doesn't stop the fool from arguing. This is a sad picture indeed. Here is a fool who could be helped by someone wiser. Notice very carefully the two most common responses of a fool to wise counsel. Either he will **blow up in rage** or he will **mock and laugh** at the truth.

Now, the fool wasn't **born** with this moral defect. It's not that his intelligence is lower than others. This self-destructive habit was a **learned response**. His life was shaped earlier on by other fools who displayed this kind of reaction to truth. And this person (remember the first point about **gullibility**) has simply picked up the pattern of response by **mimicking** other fools:

**Proverbs 14:18 - "The simple inherit folly, but the prudent are crowned with knowledge."**

Notice, the naive (same word as fool) **inherit** foolishness. Solomon isn't stupid. He knows foolishness isn't passed on through some defective gene. It grows and is passed on through bad examples and **lazy habits of listening** when confronted by the guiding hand of truth.

Here is one of the best ways to test your own heart. None of us is as wise as he thinks. Watch the pattern of your responses to wise words that confront the present direction of your life. If you are frequently inclined either to **anger** or **ridicule** you are bordering on the territory of the fool.

The fool **laughs** at wise counsel. And immediately the Holy Spirit pulls our minds into **Psalm 1:1** - **"Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers...."**

4) **EVEN THOUGH HE MAY HAVE THE INTELLIGENCE, THE FOOL WON'T TAKE THE TIME TO CONCENTRATE ON WISDOM**

There are two verses in Proverbs chapter 17 that give a vivid picture of this problem:

**Proverbs 17:24 - "The discerning sets his face toward wisdom, but the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth."**

This is a very precise picture. The fool's attention is always **somewhere else** when wisdom presents itself. He has more time for his like-minded friends, or the latest fashion, or hottest movie than he is willing to give to concentrating on the deepest needs and direction of his life. The fool is too **distracted** to feed his soul on what is important.

**Proverbs 17:16 - "Why should a fool have money in his hand to buy wisdom when he has no sense?"**

Again, this is a very important verse. The fool would have wisdom if he could **buy it over the counter in an instant**. If wisdom could be come by like a new pair of pants the fool would be wise. But it can't:

**Proverbs 2:3-5 - "...yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, [4] if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, [5] then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God."**

5) **THE FOOL KEEPS RETURNING TO HIS OWN MISTAKES**

If you remember, we saw in our study of wisdom that one word of reproof to a wise man accomplishes more than a hundred blows on the neck of a fool. This is always the fool's problem. He constantly makes his own life more difficult than it need be. Because he doesn't *listen* to wisdom, he keeps making the same mistakes over and over:

**Proverbs 26:11** - "Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly."

This is a very graphic picture. Certainly there is no good *reason* for the fool to return to his folly (any more than there is a good *reason* for the dog to return to his vomit). Perhaps no verse in the Bible shows the gross nature of sin, especially when it is obstinately repeated over and over again. Truly, life just gets *regurgitated* for the fool. Nothing of fresh benefit can enter his heart.

6) **IN HIS FINAL FORM, THE FOOL IS EQUATED WITH THE SCOFFER OR MOCKER IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS**

This is the surest sign of the heart gone totally bad. This is where the *attitude* is most clearly visible. The fool develops a *strong dislike* for correction. He will actually make sport of those who try to help him out of his dead-end folly:

**Proverbs 9:7-8** - "Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. [8] Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you."

**Proverbs 15:12** - "A scoffer does not like to be reprov'd; he will not go to the wise."

It's not accidental that all the descriptives of the fool are identical with those of the scoffer. Mockery is the final refuge for the fool. He can't reasonably *argue* with the truth. He knows it is truth. He can only make weak attempts, along with his foolish friends, at poking fun at the very truth that could save his own soul.

But his mocking attitude will one day turn on himself. As always, the fool will ultimately reap what he sows:

**Proverbs 3:34-35** - "Toward the scornners he [the Lord] is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor. [35] The wise will inherit honor, but fools get disgrace."

If the fool is free to choose his *path* he isn't free to choose his *destination*. Shame and disgrace will come eventually in this life and certainly when Jesus comes again to judge. The fool will, sooner or later, be forced to bow to the truth he dodged for so long in this world.

That's what Paul means when he reminds us all that Christ born and crucified to redeem sinners is the deepest and most challenging example of the "*wisdom of God*" - **1 Corinthians 1:23-24** - "[23] but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, [24] but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, *Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God*"

This is still the message the fool needs to hear. And Jesus is specifically called the *wisdom of God* because, just at the writer of proverbs teaches about all wisdom, Christ must be received by a *humble mind*. All foolish independence must end.

And Christ is called the wisdom of God because it is always the height of *foolishness not* to respond quickly to His grace for salvation and *not* to surrender each moment of each day as a disciple to every point at which He continues to speak into our lives.