

Marks of a Fool

David Sproule

[Editor's Note: Boyd Williams of Vero Beach, Florida, was assigned this lecture on "Marks of a Fool." Due to his wife's poor health, he was unable to complete his manuscript on this topic, so this one was submitted in its place. We are delighted that Boyd is still planning to deliver this lecture in person, and we continue to pray for his lovely wife, Donna.]

When one thinks of the book of Proverbs, he undoubtedly thinks of the emphasis on **wisdom** throughout this fascinating and practical book, most of which was written by the wise man, Solomon. In 1 Kings 3, Solomon had the opportunity to ask Jehovah for anything. His request for **wisdom** pleased the Lord, who replied, "Behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you" (1 Kgs. 3:12). [All Scripture references are taken from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted and **bold** type has been used within Scripture quotations for emphasis.] In the next chapter of 1 Kings, the Lord reveals this about Solomon and his wisdom:

1. "And **God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding**, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore" (4:29).

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2. “Thus **Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men** of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt” (4:30).
3. “For **he was wiser than all men**—than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations” (4:31).
4. “**He spoke three thousand proverbs**, and his songs were one thousand and five” (4:32).
5. “And **men of all nations**, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, **came to hear the wisdom of Solomon**” (4:34).

It was obvious to all men, especially to all Israel, that Solomon’s wisdom was so great that it was beyond him (or any man). When they heard “his” wisdom and “his” judgment, “they saw that the **wisdom of God was in him**” (1 Kgs. 3:28). So it is today when we read the book of Proverbs, that while we are reading the wisdom of Solomon, we are in truth reading the **wisdom of God**. The purpose of the book is set forth at the very beginning and notice its emphasis on **wisdom**:

To know **wisdom** and instruction,
 To perceive the words of **understanding**,
To receive the instruction of **wisdom**,
 Justice, judgment, and equity;
To give prudence to the simple,
 To the young man knowledge and discretion—
A **wise man** will hear and increase learning,
 And a **man of understanding** will attain **wise counsel**,
To **understand** a proverb and an enigma,
 The **words of the wise** and their riddles (1:2-6).

In the book that places such an emphasis on attaining godly wisdom, it is just as descriptive of those

who choose to reject wisdom—those who the God of heaven calls “fools.” 97 times in 83 verses of the 31 chapters in this book, the reader will learn about a “fool,” his “foolishness” and his “folly.” In fact, the book of Proverbs contains over forty percent of what the entire Bible teaches about “fools,” “foolishness” and “folly.”

Knowing that foolishness will lead men away from God (Prov. 5:23) and that God’s desire for each one is to “forsake foolishness and live” (Prov. 9:6), a careful study of God’s identifying marks of a fool is more than fitting if we want to be pleasing in the eyes of God. As we briefly look at ten of the characteristics that God assigns to fools in the book of Proverbs, may we each honestly examine ourselves to see if we have any hint of foolishness within us. One does not need to possess every one of these marks as a group to be a fool in God’s eyes—just one is enough, and even a part of one would be dangerous. At the conclusion of these ten warning signs, consideration will be given to the caution that the righteous must exercise in their interaction with fools. Also, a brief look at the New Testament’s unique description of a fool will be investigated.

A FOOL LACKS WISDOM

By definition, that is what a fool is—one with little or no wisdom. God is not talking about those who are born this way; God is talking about those who choose this way. Proverbs 24:7 states, “**Wisdom is too lofty for a fool.**” It is not something that he seeks to attain, and, as will be emphasized further in subsequent points, it is obvious to those around him. In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon pointed out, “Even when a fool walks along the way, **He lacks wisdom, And he shows everyone that he is a fool**” (10:3). In the end, God says, “**But fools die** for lack

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of wisdom" (Prov. 10:21). Yet, the greater point is not that they lack wisdom but that they choose to lack wisdom.

A FOOL DESPISES WISDOM

The first six verses of the book stress wisdom, instruction and understanding. In these things, Solomon points out in the very next verse, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (1:7). Then, for the first of 97 times in this book, we read about the fool in the second part of that verse—"But **fools despise wisdom and instruction.**" They despise it! They don't want to have anything to do with it! Not only do fools despise wisdom, they also "hate knowledge" (1:22), the means by which, in large part, wisdom is attained. In Proverbs 15:5, Solomon indicates that this can start at a young age, even as a child accepts or rejects the wisdom of his parents—"A fool **despises his father's instructions.**" A penetrating question is asked in Proverbs 17:16, "Why is there in the hand of a fool the purchase price of **wisdom, Since he has no heart for it?**" As a result of despising wisdom and therefore lacking wisdom, notice the result.

A FOOL CANNOT HANDLE WISDOM

The wisdom contained in proverbial statements is unable to be understood or even conveyed to others by the fool. It is quite apparent that wise sayings simply do not fit the fool. Twice in Proverbs 26 this is mentioned: "Like the legs of the lame that hang limp Is a **proverb in the mouth of fools**...Like a thorn that goes into the hand of a drunkard Is a **proverb in the mouth of fools**" (26:7, 9). His attempts to express wisdom either fall flat or turn back around on him, causing more harm than good. He cannot handle wisdom because he does not have an eye for it. "Wisdom is in the sight of him who has understanding,

But the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth” (Prov. 17:24). If wisdom came and sat down in front of a fool, he would miss it, for his eyes, his thoughts, his desires, his entire focus, are everywhere but in the proper place. Twice also in chapter 26, it is declared that, just as a fool cannot handle wisdom, he cannot handle honor. “As snow in summer and rain in harvest, So honor is not fitting for a fool...Like one who binds a stone in a sling Is he who gives honor to a fool” (26:1, 8).

A FOOL LACKS PROPER JUDGMENT

In the New King James Version, Proverbs 15:21 helps us to see that the fool is one who “**is destitute of discernment.**” The fool, because he has discarded God’s wisdom, refuses to recognize, and even denies, that there is a difference (a separation) between right and wrong. Knowledge has been rejected. Wisdom has been rejected. Discernment has been rejected. Therefore, poor decisions and judgments will be made. Several will be noted in the following points, but for example, note Proverbs 18:13. “He who **answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him.**” Wisdom dictates that a man gathers all the facts that he possibly can before a judgment is made. Then, only then, and not before then, should he speak about the matter. To speak about it before he knows all the facts “is folly and shame.” Even for those who are striving to live according to God’s wisdom, this would be good to remember. In nearly every situation that may arise, there are two sides to the story. To make a judgment after hearing only one side would be foolish. Another indication that a fool is destitute of discernment is found in Proverbs 26:11, “As a dog returns to his own vomit, **So a fool repeats his folly.**” A fool forgets his own foolishness. A fool never learns. Anyone who is foolish enough to

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repeat foolishness (sometimes over and over again) is truly destitute of discernment.

A FOOL SETS HIS HEART ON EVIL

Having rejected wisdom and the counsel of God, the fool only has one way to turn—toward evil. So strong is his turn to evil that “it is **an abomination to fools to depart from evil**” (13:19). Evil envelopes them to the point that it *is* them. It becomes their passion, their inner drive, so much so that “**fools mock at sin**” (14:9). Solomon makes this comparison: “**To do evil is like a sport to a fool**” (10:23). While “the heart of him who has understanding seeks knowledge,” Solomon says, “**the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness**” (15:14). Foolishness is their diet. Yet, what they fail to realize, and what Christians today must grasp, is that “the devising of foolishness is sin” (24:9). In Ecclesiastes, Solomon writes that the fools walk “in darkness” (2:14) and are “overly wicked” (7:17), “for they do not know that they do evil” (5:1). They set their hearts on evil, but are so enraptured in it, that God sends “them a strong delusion, that they should believe the lie” (2 Thess. 2:11), and yet it seems like the right thing to do.

A FOOL SEEKS HIS OWN WAY

Again, Proverbs 17:24 states, “Wisdom is in the sight of him who has understanding, But **the eyes of a fool** are on the ends of the earth.” He believes that whatever he is doing, based on his own “wisdom,” is the only way to do it. “**The way of a fool is right in his own eyes**, But he who heeds counsel is wise” (Prov. 12:15; cf. 26:12). “**He who trusts in his own heart is a fool**, But whoever walks wisely will be delivered” (28:26). There is a vast, vast difference between **trusting in your own heart** and

“trust[ing] in the Lord with all your heart...and lean[ing] not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledg[ing] Him” (3:5-6). When one trusts in the Lord with ALL his heart, that does not leave any room to **“trust in his own heart.”** The two concepts are mutually exclusive, and they simply cannot fit in the same place (one’s heart). Then, once “his way” runs its course and ends in ruin, notice how the fool responds—**“The foolishness of man ruins his way, and his heart rages against the Lord”** (Prov. 19:3, NASB). Whenever something goes wrong and that person (who is obviously a fool) is not willing to take any blame for the outcome, he looks for someone else to blame. Only a fool would turn around and lash out at God for his own folly. Of course, even that kind of a response **“is right in his own eyes.”** We would do well to trust in God, commit our lives to Him, and then humbly pray, **“O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man** who walks to direct his own steps” (Jer. 10:23).

A FOOL REFUSES TO CONTROL HIS WRATH

To say that a fool is often out of control in fits of anger and wrath may be an understatement. When Proverbs 19:3 paints a picture of a man raging against the Lord, that’s not exactly one who is controlling his wrath. But one is deemed a fool in the eyes of God even when his uncontrolled rage, wrath and temper is not directed at God but at others or even himself. Observe how this is true in the following passages. **“A wise man fears and departs from evil, But a fool rages and is self-confident”** (Prov. 14:16). **“A quick-tempered man acts foolishly, And a man of wicked intentions is hated”** (14:17). **“He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, But he who is impulsive**

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exalts folly" (14:29). **"...Any fool can start a quarrel"** (20:3). Only a fool would think that his rage, quick temper, impulsiveness and quarrelsome nature could be hidden. But Solomon insists that **"a fool's wrath is known at once"** (12:16), and by his own actions (without any help or having someone draw attention to it), **"a fool lays open his folly"** (13:16). Both testaments call upon God's people to restrain themselves. James say, "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be...**slow to wrath**" (1:19). That only comes about with much practice and strong determination. In the Old Testament too, Solomon warns, "Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, For **anger rests in the bosom of fools**" (Ecc. 7:9). Learning to control self is a must for faithful Christians.

A FOOL REFUSES TO CONTROL HIS MOUTH

The previous point stated that a fool refuses to control his wrath, which is most often evident by the fact that the fool refuses to control his mouth. Listening to someone's speech can reveal much about him, and God is the one who first tells us that. "Wisdom rests in the heart of him who has understanding, But **what is in the heart of fools is made known**" (Prov. 14:33). It can be made known by his actions, and more often than not, it is made known by his words, for "a fool has no delight in understanding, But in **expressing his own heart**" (18:2).

A Fool's Mouth Speaks Foolishness

"The lips of the wise disperse knowledge, But **the heart of the fool does not do so**" (15:7). While "the tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly" (15:2a), and while "a prudent man conceals knowledge" (12:23), **"the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness"** (15:2b). Simply stated,

“Excellent speech is not becoming to a fool” (17:7), “but the lips of a fool shall swallow him up” (Ecc. 10:12).

A Fool’s Mouth Speaks Too Much

Proverbs 10:19 states, “In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.” Based upon this passage about the wise man’s restraint of words, it ought to be obvious how to spot a fool. **“A fool’s voice is known by his many words”** (Ecc. 5:13), for “a fool also **multiplies words**” (Ecc. 10:14). Herein lies one of the greatest signs (at least from man’s perspective) in determining wisdom and foolishness, for Solomon acknowledges that “even a fool is counted wise when he holds his peace. When he shuts his lips, he is considered perceptive” (Prov. 17:28). But, when a fool opens his mouth, he removes all doubt as to the condition of his heart.

A Fool’s Mouth Creates Problems with Others

The fool creates all sorts of problems for himself because he **“vents all his feelings**, But a wise man holds them back” (Prov. 29:11). The fact that he speaks foolishness whenever he opens his mouth, coupled with the fact that he multiplies his words, is naturally going to generate conflict with others. **“A fool’s lips enter into contention**, And his mouth calls for blows” (18:6). Part of his problem is that **“in the mouth of a fool is a rod of pride”** (14:3), and his sense of self-importance is what causes this contention. A fool is also identified as **“whoever spreads slander”** (10:18). Note how closely related these items are. Through our own **pride** (thinking we are better than others), we engage in **slander** (to try to damage the reputation of another), which leads us into **contention**—all because we could not or would not keep our mouths shut. Thus, God calls upon us, “If you have

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been foolish in exalting yourself, Or if you have devised evil, **put your hand on your mouth**" (30:32).

A Fool's Mouth Creates Problems with God

Twice in Proverbs 10, it states that "a prating (babbling, NASB) fool **will fall**" (10:8, 10). We cannot run off at the mouth and not expect that sin is not present (cf. Prov. 10:19). While God says on the one hand that "the mouth of the foolish is **near destruction**" (10:14), He affirms on the other hand that "a fool's mouth **is his destruction**, And his lips are **the snare of his soul**" (18:7). Take in just how strong those words are. God does **not** say that a fool's mouth **CAN BE** his destruction; He says it **IS** his destruction. God does not say that a fool's lips are **A** snare of his soul; He says they are **THE** snare of his soul. Do you get the feeling that God feels pretty strongly about this? The wise man insists, "**Whoever guards his mouth and tongue Keeps his soul from troubles**" (21:23). Therefore, our prayer to God should be the very same plea that the wise man's father, David, made, "**Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips**" (Psa. 141:3).

A FOOL RESISTS CORRECTION

Fools do not want to change. They defy discipline of any kind. So Solomon writes, "**Rebuke** is more effective for a wise man Than **a hundred blows on a fool**" (Prov. 17:10). Ten chapters later is an illustration of just how resistant and resilient a fool is to attempts at correction—"Though you grind a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, Yet **his foolishness will not depart from him**" (27:22). This point ties in with the fact that "the way of a fool is right in his own eyes" (12:15); he gets set in

his way and cannot be swayed from it no matter what level of pressure is put upon him.

A FOOL SQUANDERS HIS WEALTH

Whatever the amount is (large or small), a fool should not and cannot be trusted with riches. **“Luxury is not fitting for a fool”** (Prov. 19:10). The contrast is drawn in Proverbs 21:20, **“There is desirable treasure, And oil in the dwelling of the wise, But a foolish man squanders it”** (21:20). That is not to say that all fools are poor, or that someone who prospers is not also foolish. But, there is not a single fool who recognizes that **“the earth is the Lord’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein”** (Psa. 24:1). Thus, whatever a fool has he squanders because he is not using it for God. That is why the rich man in Luke 12 is called by God, **“Fool!”** (Luke 12:20). For so is everyone **“who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God”** (Luke 12:21). Solomon summarized this by saying in Proverbs 14:24, **“The crown of the wise is their riches, But the foolishness of fools is folly”** (reminiscent of Jesus’ words in the Sermon on the Mount, **“they have their reward,”** Matt. 6:2, 5, 16).

THE CAUTION OF THE RIGHTEOUS TOWARD A FOOL

Not only does God give us an apt description of a fool to make him easy to identify, He also warns us about our own conduct around such a fool and cautions us in our interaction with him.

Caution Begins with Meeting a Fool

“Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs, Rather than a fool in his folly” (Prov. 17:12).

Caution in Speaking in a Fool's Presence

"Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, For he will despise the wisdom of your words" (23:9).

Caution in Trusting a Fool

"He who sends a message by the hand of a fool Cuts off his own feet and drinks violence" (26:6).

Caution in Answering a Fool

At first, Solomon says, **"Do not answer a fool** according to his folly, Lest you also be like him" (26:4). In the very next verse he says, **"Answer a fool** according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own eyes" (26:5). These verses do not contradict one another. (God would have to be pretty sloppy to contradict himself in two consecutive verses.) First of all, we recognize that God is cautioning us in whatever response we give to a fool. In these two verses, God reveals that we may meet, interact and even need to respond to a fool in at least two different circumstances. As such, there may be times when do not respond at all, lest we be pulled in to their folly (v. 4). There may also be times when a response is necessary to expose him in his folly (v. 5). Neither of these responses is to be done in a spirit of arrogance or with a holier-than-thou attitude. In all cases, we are to behave as Christ would have us to do. Still, we need to rely on God to give to us liberally the wisdom necessary to distinguish between these two circumstances and to make the wise response (cf. Jas. 1:5). The Lord would also have us to know, **"If a wise man contends with a foolish man,** Whether the fool rages or laughs, there is no peace" (Prov. 29:9).

Caution in Associating with a Fool

The Lord warns, “He who walks with wise men will be wise, But **the companion of fools will be destroyed**” (Prov. 13:20). When we have done all we can to influence the life of a fool and to plant within him the seed of the gospel (the only thing powerful enough to change a fool, cf. 1 Cor. 1:18), God tells us, “**Go from the presence of a foolish man**, When you do not perceive in him the lips of knowledge” (Prov. 14:7).

IDENTIFYING THE FOOL OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

The principles for identifying a fool that were written almost 3,000 years ago in the book of Proverbs are still just as real today. **Anyone** today who lacks wisdom, despises wisdom, cannot handle wisdom, lacks proper judgment, sets his heart on evil, seeks his own way, refuses to control his wrath, refuses to control his mouth, resists correction or squanders his wealth is **still a fool today** and must be considered as such. By his actions, **the heart of the fool** is speaking loud and clear, proclaiming his message to all the world. For some fools, they may not even realize what they are preaching. Others know it all too well. When any one of these ten marks identifies you, by your fruit your heart is known and the message is delivered—“**The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’**” (Psa. 14:1; 53:1). A fool, filled up with the foolishness of his folly, does not know God! In fact, Psalm 74:22 states, “**The foolish man reproaches [God] daily.**” The New American Standard reads, “**...reproaches [God] all day long.**”

A Fool Does Not Obey Jesus

The foolish man described in the New Testament is no different. While foolishness is mentioned numerous times in the New Testament, perhaps the best known passage is found in the last four verses of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus leads up to these verses in Matthew 7 with these statements:

“...you will be **judged**...Enter by **the narrow gate**...which leads to life, and there are **few who find it**...**Not everyone** who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ **shall enter the kingdom of heaven**, but **he who does the will of My Father in heaven**. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, **‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’**” (Matt. 7:1, 13-14, 21-23).

What an incredible sermon. Throughout the sermon, from beginning to end, Jesus places an emphasis on doing what He says. Everyone is going to be judged; we will all be judged by the same measure; we will all be judged by His word (cf. John 12:48). We must all strive to be ready to enter the narrow gate that leads to life. The only way that we can enter the kingdom of heaven is to do the will of the Father. If we do not this—if we do not prepare ourselves for the judgment by doing the will of God revealed in the Words of Christ—Jesus declared that He would have no choice but to condemn us to hell, departing from Him for all of eternity. Jesus could not have been any more straight-forward or clear in his message.

He then goes on to tell what has become a very well-known parable, beginning with these two verses:

24 “Therefore **whoever hears** these sayings of Mine, **and does them, I will liken him to a wise man** who built his house on the rock:

25 “and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock” (Matt. 7:24-25).

Can you imagine anyone hearing these words of Jesus—that are so plain and so direct that they could not possibly be misunderstood—and then turning around and **not doing them**? Who is there that does not want to enter into life? Who is there that does not want to enter into the kingdom of heaven? Who is there, among accountable individuals, who would not want to do everything that Jesus said in order to have these great promises?

That “who” is described in the next two verses:

26 “But **everyone who hears** these sayings of Mine, and **does not do them, will be like a foolish man** who built his house on the sand:

27 “and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall” (Matt. 7:26-27).

Jesus, the Son of God, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the Savior of the world, identifies **everyone** who hears His Word (the same Word that will judge **everyone** on the last day, John 12:48) and **refuses to do it (refuses to obey it)** as a **FOOL!** Jesus identifies **everyone** who does **not want to enter into life** as a **FOOL!** Jesus identifies **everyone** who does **not want to enter into the kingdom of heaven** as a **FOOL!** Jesus identifies **everyone** who does **not want to do the will of the Father** as a **FOOL!** Jesus identifies **everyone** who **chooses to do things their own way** as a **FOOL!**

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Anyone who does not obey the will of God is identified as a fool. In the Old Testament, Samuel told Saul, **“You have done foolishly!”** Why? “You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you” (1 Sam. 13:13). God meant what He said then. He means what He says today.

A Fool Rejects the Message of the Cross

In the first chapter of First Corinthians, Paul stated that “the message of the cross is **foolishness** to those who are perishing...to the Jews [it’s] a stumbling block and to the Greek **foolishness**” (1:18, 23). The **same message**, that to one group is **foolishness**, “is the power of God” to another (1:18). Why? Go back to the words of Jesus for the answer. One group **hears** the gospel of Christ (the message of the cross) and **does** what is commanded. The other group **hears** the same gospel of Christ (the message of the cross) and **does NOT** do what is commanded. “The message of the cross is **foolishness** to those who are perishing” (1:18), because **they are fools for not obeying!**

A Fool Denies That Faith Without Works Is Dead

It is not enough for someone to **only believe** the message of the cross; complete obedience is absolutely necessary. That is seen, first of all, by Jesus’ use of the phrase, **“and DOES them.”** It is also confirmed in James 2, where the fool is described again. In James 2:14-26, God describes the relationship between faith and works. A full discussion of that passage is not necessary or appropriate here, except to note verse 20. Through inspiration, James argues here that faith, by itself, will not justify a man, apart from works. The two must be joined together. If one ignores this fact, notice what the Holy Spirit calls him in verse 20. **“But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?”** The New American

Standards reads, "But are you willing to recognize, **you foolish fellow**, that faith without works is useless?" If one refuses to recognize and accept that faith alone will not save, that faith without works is dead and useless, God says that person is a **FOOLISH MAN**. Those are serious words from a serious God about a serious matter. May we not be so **foolish** as to tamper with the infallible, authoritative Word of God!

A Fool Turns from the Truth

One final passage in the New Testament in which God identifies fools is in Galatians 3. The book of Galatians is written to Christians, "to the churches of Galatia" (1:2). The recipients "are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of [them] as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (3:26-27). Is it possible that God could look at His own children and call them **fools**? The church at Galatia was being infiltrated by Judaizing teachers who wanted to blend the gospel of Christ with the legalities of the Old Testament. Paul marveled in the first chapter that the church was "turning away so soon from Him who called [them] in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another" in an attempt "to pervert the gospel of Christ" (1:6-7). To those Christians, who had believed the gospel of Christ and had put Christ on in baptism and yet were now seeking to revert to an obsolete Jewish system, Paul sternly wrote, "**O foolish Galatians!** Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?" (Gal. 3:1). Even Christians, who were not obeying **the truth** (there's only one) of **the gospel** (there's only one), were called **FOOLS** by God.

CONCLUSION

The words of Jesus sum up this entire study well. Just as the book of Proverbs contrasts wisdom and foolishness, Jesus contrasts the wise man with the foolish man. In the end, there is uniformity in the words of Solomon and the words of Jesus. **Anyone** who refuses to acknowledge God, believe His Word, submit to His will, abide by His wisdom and obey what He says **is a FOOL!** It does not matter what age you live in, what country you live in or what language you speak, God could not make it any simpler than that.

The consequences for the fool are obvious. For being led astray by his own foolishness (cf. Prov. 5:23) and for elevating his own **ways** above **the way** of God, he shall receive his reward when Jesus says, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matt. 7:23).

Fortunately, even for a fool, there is hope. God calls upon all men, especially fools, "**Forsake foolishness and live, And go in the way of understanding**" (Prov. 9:6; cf. 8:5). By the power of God, the message of the cross and complete obedience to the will of God, one can turn his life around. It all starts with "the fear of Lord." While "fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1:7), "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (9:10). If one wants to break out of his foolish ways, he must learn to fear, awe and reverence our Creator, Lord and Savior. True awe and respect for the Lord will lead to obedience which will lead to life.

While a Christian is to be hesitant in calling another a fool (cf. Matt. 5:22), God is not! God shows us abundantly the attributes of a fool and warns us of its costly end. A wise person will do all he can to avoid such

foolishness. Consider carefully these ten marks of a fool from the book of Proverbs and the vivid description in the New Testament, then honestly examine yourself to see if there is any hint of foolishness within you. Remember that one does not need to possess every one of these marks as a group to be a fool in God's eyes—just one is enough, and even a part of one would be dangerous.

May we, under the direction of heavenly wisdom that is found in the pages of our Bibles, seek daily to be found "wise" in the eyes of God. "The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" But the wise says in his heart, "There is a God, He is alive, in Him we live, and we survive; From dust our God created man, He is our God, the great I AM" (Aaron W. Dicus, 1966).

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