



1 As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool. 2 As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come. 3 A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back. 4 Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. 5 Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit. 6 He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage. 7 The legs of the lame are not equal: so is a parable in the mouth of fools. 8 As he that bindeth a stone in a sling, so is he that giveth honour to a fool. 9 As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouth of fools. 10 The great God that formed all things both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors. 11 As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly. 12 Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him. about sluggards 13 The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets. 14 As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed. 15 The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth. 16 The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason. (Proverbs 26:1-16)

I dedicate this 'devotion on fools' to all of the self-deceived atheists and false believers out there. In a court challenge in Florida to the term, Christmas Break, being used in the public schools, an atheist claimed that the practice was discriminatory because the same respect was not given to atheists for a holiday of their own. The judge overrode the objection with the comment: "But there IS, indeed, a holiday named for atheists - April Fool's Day!" The judge could not have been more correct, or more biblical, in his response. "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.*" (Psalms 14:1) Fools are not only confined to the boundaries of Washington, D.C., but are plentiful enough to be found everywhere.

The stars of today's devotion are fools and sluggards (can there be any difference?). Fools, and their ways, are described in verses 1-12; and sluggards and their ways are described in verses 13-16. Let us allow the fools to go first....

FOOLS:

1 "As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool." 2 "As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come." The Bible draws no distinction between a fool and an unbelieving sinner. The two are synonymous. The laws of nature are laws of God which He has incorporated into the physical Creation. They are steady, constant, and unchanging. Just as it is not a natural phenomenon for snow to occur in summer, neither is it natural that a fool should receive honor of any. Honor to a fool only magnifies his foolishness and makes him even more fool. As well, it makes fools of those who convey the honor. Sometimes, I wonder if the American voting public is not comprised of an abundance of fools since we honor so many of them with our vote. *"Excellent speech becometh not a fool: much less do lying lips a prince."* (Proverbs 17:7) God has little patience for fools since they remain, willingly, in their sins. **"Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee:...."** (Luke 12:20) Even the wings of the sparrow have a rewarding purpose in flight, but the fool knows no such purpose.

3 "A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back." A horse needs a whip in the hands of the driver, and a mule or donkey will not obey without the painful bridle to turn him from his own way to the way of his master; so, a fool needs to be encouraged to obey common sense by force of punishment - in fact, the fool is constantly punished for his foolishness. I honestly believe that every man who rejects God is the highest order of the kingdom of fools and is not in his 'right mind.' At least the Prodigal, *"when he came to himself,"* arose and returned to his loving father. There is no greater fool than he who goes to war against the King of Kings and Lord of Heaven.

Here we read a seeming contradiction, but it is only a seeming one: 4 "Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him." If you answer with seriousness the folly and logic of a fool, you will appear in the same description; but 5 "Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit." This second part actually means to REBUKE a fool according to his folly. If a fool is not constantly corrected, his mind will come to believe he is right in it - i.e., the foolish Emperor Caligula. If foolishness in a fool, or even a child, is not confronted, it becomes the normal.

6 "He that sendeth a message by the hand of a fool cutteth off the feet, and drinketh damage." 7 "The legs of the lame are not equal: so is a parable in the mouth of fools." If a message is important enough to send, it must be sent by a reliable messenger. If a field commander sends a message to his general by a fool, what damage will result if the fool carries the message to the enemy's commander? He may as well drink water from a poisoned brook - except the poison will be more certain in its outcome than the behavior of a fool. Since a fool is an unregenerate sinner, all he does is sin: *How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?* " (Job 15:16) If I heed the advice of fools, how different from them am I?

8 "As he that bindeth a stone in a sling, so is he that giveth honour to a fool." Goliath would never have been defeated if David had been a fool. Who would bind a stone in his sling when going against a giant? Very much akin to this is a man who confers honor on a fool. It is wasted honor and diminishes the currency of any future awards. A fool commits evil for sport. *"It is as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding hath wisdom."* (Prov 10:23) Wisdom comes from God, but the fool has rejected that wisdom along with the God who grants it.

9 "As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouth

of fools." The fool will never see the wisdom of a parable, but may detect a foolish application of it. The wisdom of a true parable is not appreciated by the fool, but is a vexation to his nature.

10 *"The great God that formed all things both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors."* Just as water seeks the lowest level, and the deer pants for water, so does the fool receive the reward that he has won by his foolishness. I prefer not to have the reward of fools and transgressors for it is the same desserts for both - an unending Hell - not only in the after-life, but this present world.

11 *"As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly."* There is little difference in a fool and a dog except, perhaps, loyalty. A dog is drawn to recommit that, which he vomited up, to his stomach. He does not find it repulsive. So twice-eaten food is not an offense to the dog, and neither is the fool's mistake an offense to him. He returns immediately to his fool's mistakes regardless the number of times regurgitated. The fool is no different from a common swine: **20** *For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. 21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. 22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.* (2 Peter 2:20-22) A Christian who has known the mercy and grace of God and who, after receiving that pardon, returns to such sins, is a bona fide fool.

SLUGGARDS:

12 *Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him. about sluggards.* Perhaps God has qualified sluggards as the lowest form of the fool. I was amazed, while living in the Middle East, at the arrogance and conceit of the Muslim population. This was especially magnified by the fact that they had far less to be conceited about than any human population with which I am familiar. They had an unyielding faith in a false god that loved the shedding of blood, especially of the weak and innocent. To trust in such a god requires the maxing out of stupidity and the minimizing of common sense. In addition to this, any who are familiar with the Arab and Muslim countries will know that they are among the laziest people on earth. While in Iran, I observed that all road and building construction was done, predominantly, by Afghan workers. When asked why this was so, the Iranians told me that street work was beneath their dignity. This was occurring even while the standard of living in Iran was quite low. Please do not count me among those who try to empathize with fools.

13 *"The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets."* This is the second reference to this very notion from Proverbs 22:13, so it must be a significant reference to the way of the foolish sluggard. He will find every excuse to keep from going outside to labor. He imagines there to be a monster behind every stone. He invents reasons to avoid duty. We have them among us today: those who are constantly taking advantage of sick leave, or failing to perform a full day's work for a full day's pay.

14 *"As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed."* God employs His words with great economy. A door hinge is designed to smoothly and effortlessly turn the larger door. So does the sluggard turn smoothly and with the least output of energy upon his bed. His dread of effort is the oil that greases his hinges. He lingers as long as possible on that bed while others labor. He is a fool because he

gathers no wealth and injures his physical constitution.

15 "The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth." The bosom referred to is literally a wide dish from which he eats. He is so lazy that he dreads to lift the food from the dish to his mouth. How many on the welfare rolls even despise having to get out of bed and go to the mailbox for the assistance made possible by working men and women?

16 "The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason." Do you ever wonder where on earth we dig up the profoundly clueless idiots that make decisions on monetary and economic policy in America? Their great idol is John Maynard Keynes, father of Keynesian economics - an insane philosophy that holds that governments should control national economies through manipulation of currency, debt, and social give-a-ways. This philosophy flies in the face of such responsible free-market economists as the Austrian school represented by Hayek and von Mises. This latter philosophy is in complete accord with scriptural wisdom that disdains the sluggard. ". . . *even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat.*" (2 Thess 3:10) God despises the sluggard, for the sluggard is a fool and a sinner. The fools in our National government are either the greatest fools I have ever studied, or they are intentionally trying to bankrupt America with their policies that promote the sluggard. The conceit of the fool in a high office believes itself better than seven wise men who can give reasonable evidence of a contrary path. God save America from fools and idiots who we, ourselves, have elevated to high office.