

Ruin and Rage: The Signs of This Age

Proverbs 19:3

The foolishness of man perverts his way: and his heart frets against the LORD.

Stop to consider how much of the history of humanity is portrayed in this simple proverb. In what Henry Morris described as “the long war against God,”ⁱ mankind has attempted to install himself as “man-king.” And when the consequences come, with the heartache of a horrible harvest, whom do men blame? This proverb answers: “*The foolishness of man perverts his way: and his heart frets against the LORD.*” Ruin and rage are the signs of this age and it’s time to call men to repent.

The Foolishness of Man

This word translated “foolishness”ⁱⁱ indicates the actions of a fool. One author wrote, “Such a person is lacking in sense and is generally corrupt.”ⁱⁱⁱ The emphasis of this proverb is that this foolishness perverts or twists the way of a man (or woman). As we shall see, it is not merely the actions of his hands but also the attitudes of his heart.

Perverts His Way

The word translated “perverts” means “to twist, overturn, or ruin.”^{iv} The word is used in Exodus 23:8 where we are taught that a bribe perverts justice.^v Foolishness ruins the life of each one in the same way that a bribe perverts justice. One expert on language indicates that this word was originally from Arabic.^{vi} If so, the idea is that foolishness leads a person’s energies to come to naught. In this we can see the connection with an earlier message from James 1. Lust brings forth sin and sin when it is finished brings forth death.^{vii} Foolishness ruins the way of the foolish. We agreed in the earlier message that none of us wants to have an empty, fruitless summer. We want our labors to count for eternity. And none of us would want to ruin his or her life. So be warned by the authority of God’s Word: foolishness will only frustrate you.

One kind of ruin is illustrated in Proverbs 5:20-23 **“²⁰ And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? ²¹ For the ways of man *are* before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings. ²² His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. ²³ He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.”**

Ruin and rage are the signs of this age and it’s time to call men to repent. Another kind of ruin is illustrated in Proverbs 14:1 **“Every wise woman builds her house but the foolish plucks it down with her hands.”** And Proverbs 14:7, **“He that is soon angry deals foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated.”**

But Proverbs 14:8 goes on to lament, **“Folly is joy to him that is destitute of wisdom . . .”** In fact, Proverbs 15:2, **“the mouth of fools pours out foolishness.”** Proverbs 22:15 **“Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child;”** Proverbs 26:11 describes the gross reality: **“as a dog returns to his vomit, so a fool returns to his folly.”** Yet, this is the fruit of foolishness. But it gets worse.

And His Heart Frets Against the Lord

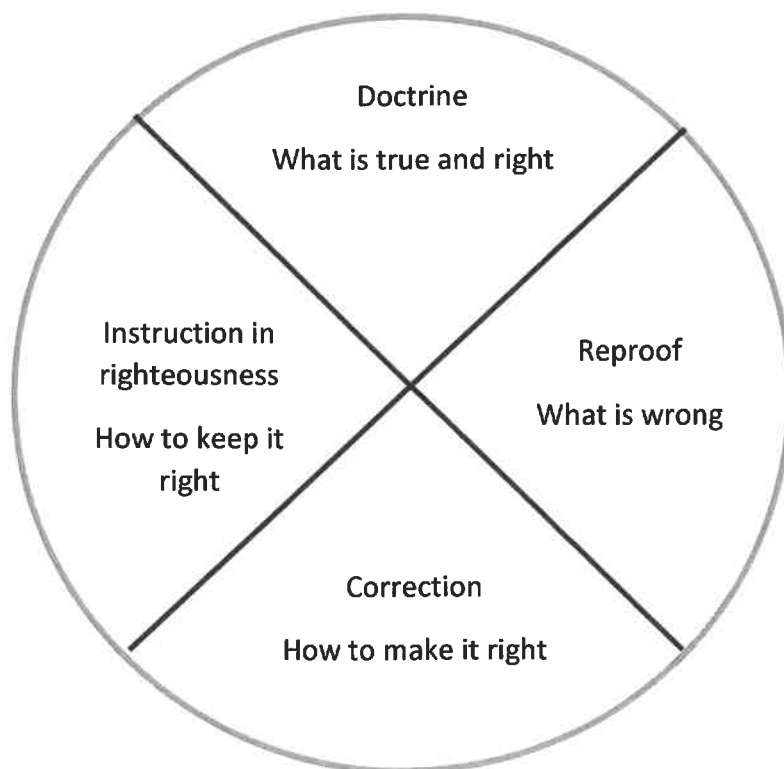
The word translated “frets” here can be translated “to be sad, to be wrath, foaming, storming, indignant, or vexed.”^{viii} And all of these are against the Lord. Foolishness ruins their lives and in retaliation, they rail against the Lord. Stop again to consider how much of the history of humanity is portrayed in this simple proverb. Even what appear to be the very best of people can fall into fretting, foaming foolishness. For instance, 2 Chronicles 26 records the exciting career of King Uzziah. Yet his fury foamed up in 2 Chronicles 26:19, “**Then Uzziah was wrath, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wrath with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense altar.**” Verse 21 laments, “**King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death.**” King Uzziah should serve as warning for all of us. He made many wise choices, and was highly esteemed by prophets such as Isaiah;^{ix} but his foolish wrath ruined the rest of his life.

Using the Bible for All It’s Worth

The Scriptural reminder given to me by this dear congregation last Sunday for our 25th anniversary is from 2 Timothy 3:14-17: “¹⁴ **But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*; ¹⁵ And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷ that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”**

This passage helps us know how to use virtually every other passage of Scripture.

Biblical doctrine is what is true and right.
Reproof explains what is wrong.
Correction is how to take what is wrong and make it right. Instruction in righteousness is how to keep it right.



Where does Proverbs 19:3 fit in this pattern? (*The foolishness of man perverts his way: and his heart frets against the LORD.*) Clearly, this would fit in the area of “what is wrong” and serve as a reproof. This verse alerts us about what is seriously wrong; it leads us to understand that a correction needs to be made. So how should we apply our hearts to this proverb?

Illustrations

- When Adam sinned so foolishly, he blamed God. Instead of taking responsibility for his foolish behavior, Adam said, **“The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.”**^x Adam’s foolishness perverted his way, and Adam blamed God.^{xi} Eve, in turn, blamed the snake.
- Adam’s firstborn did the same kind of thing. Cain murdered his brother, and then faced the consequences.^{xii} His foolishness perverted his way, and then he declared, “My punishment is more that I can bear.”

One of the strangest episodes of stormy foolishness appears in Matthew 27:43, where the Pharisees railed against the Lord. Their foolishness had so twisted their ways that they quoted a Messianic psalm against the Messiah! They screamed Psalm 22:8, **“He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.”** Even the religionists were twisted! Ruin and rage are the signs of this age and it’s time to call men to repent. This verse should serve as a warning to every one of us who knows the Scriptures. In our twisted foolishness, we could misuse the Scriptures and dishonor God.

But this shows us how much love God loves you and me. Knowing our foolishness – knowing that foolishness had twisted our lives – Christ loved us so much that He came to us. We were on the twisted trail to hell, and Christ came to us. He took our twisted wickedness upon Himself on the cross. He faced our foolish sins and straightened us out by His amazing grace. When Christ died, he took the punishment for our perverseness. Those near the cross railed against Christ. Wicked men have railed against Him ever since. But He rose from the dead that He might bring us to God. Ruin and rage are the signs of this age and it’s time to call men to repent.

Applications

The need to repent: Think carefully about his verse: *“The foolishness of man perverts his way: and his heart frets against the LORD.”* Wouldn’t you expect this verse to read like this: “The foolishness of man perverts his way, and he turns away from it?” But that is not what it says. Foolishness finds its way into the heart and leads us to flail and rail against God.

Thinking through problems: Knowing that foolishness can ruin your life, how should you treat foolishness? Should you assume that only other people indulge in foolishness while you do not? Can it only ruin other people’s lives and not your own?

Reflecting on your choices: When you pause to consider your poor choices, don’t compound the problem by blaming God.

When you are sharing the Gospel: You will be faced with this objection: “If God is the good, all-powerful God, why do evil things happen to people?”^{xiii} Part of the answer is that we must point to the way that foolishness has twisted our understanding. We can’t think straight without the amazing grace of God.

Be prepared to face our culture: the most recent gay pride displays in our city should fill us with pity. “*The foolishness of man perverts his way: and his heart frets against the LORD.*” We are hearing a lot of blame cast toward God in these days. Some say God is wrong when He declares adultery, or homosexuality, or pedophilia to be wrong. Most refuse to admit that it is the foolishness of man that has twisted the understanding in our culture. But the Good News of Jesus Christ must be preached. Men and women must recognize that their foolishness is ruining their lives and return to their loving Creator. May God give every one of us the ability to look for our own foolishness before we start fighting the foolishness of others. But may God give us the boldness to proclaim that sin is ruining the lives of people, and help them to be reconciled to God. Ruin and rage are the signs of this age and it’s time to call men to repent.

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ⁱ Dr. Henry Morris, “The Long War Against God” <https://www.christianbook.com/the-long-war-against-god/henry-morris/9780890512913/pd/12914>

ⁱⁱ אִוְוֵלֶת (*’iwweleth*)

ⁱⁱⁱ Louis Goldberg, “אִוְוֵלֶת,” ed. R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 19. The author went on to say, “*’ēwīl* primarily refers to moral perversion or insolence, to what is sinful rather than to mental stupidity. This kind of a fool despises wisdom and is impatient with discipline. He who does not fear God is a fool and will be unable to grasp wisdom or benefit from godly discipline (Prov 1:7). While the wise accept godly instruction, the boastful or babbling fool who rejects it will fall down by the predicaments he makes for himself (Prov 10:8). Because a fool feels that his own way is without error, he does not seek or listen to counsel as the wise one does.”

^{iv} סָלַף (*sālaph*) *distort, twist, pervert, ruin.*

^v Deuteronomy 16:18 states that a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous

^{vi} Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 701. “Arabic سَلَفَ (*salafa*) is *pass, pass away, come to naught Lane.*”

^{vii} James 1:15

^{viii} From the Hebrew זָעַף (*zā’aph*) *fret, be sad, be wroth.* R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 247.

^{ix} See Isaiah 6:1

^x Genesis 3:12

^{xi} I think it was Erwin Lutzer who wrote, “Adam blamed Eve; Eve blamed the snake; and the snake didn’t have a leg to stand on!”

^{xii} Genesis 4:8-12

^{xiii} In an earlier message, we considered the answer of Nahum 1:7 “The LORD is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.” Yes, God is good; He is also our stronghold, exercising sovereign control. Most importantly, He knows those who have exercised faith in Him, even when they don’t fully understand.