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### "Fools": A Declaration to Seminarians, Professors, and Preachers

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# “Fools”: A declaration to seminarians, professors, and preachers

**Y***ou are fools.* And I am a fool to insult you by calling you *fools* because does not the Word say that if you call your brother a “fool” you are in danger of hellfire?

Some are thinking, “You’re wrong preacher—I’m no fool.” But you are debating the wrong question. The question is not, *Am I a fool?* but *What kind of fool am I?*

## Petty follies

Some of you are fools because you allow slights and insults to fester within you until fury drives you to folly, as it did King Saul. He imagined that David was a malicious enemy plotting to seize his throne, so he took with him 3,000 of his best troops in order to hunt David down.

David slipped into Saul’s camp one night. Saul was sleeping inside a ring formed by slumbering warriors. David took the spear and the jug of water near Saul’s head and slipped away. He climbed a nearby hill and woke the camp with his shouts. Saul recognized David’s voice and called out, “Is that you, my son David?”

“Yes, my lord the king,” David replied. “Why are you chasing me? What is my crime? Why has the king

of Israel come out to search for a flea? Why does he hunt me down like a partridge on the mountains?”

Then Saul confessed, “I have sinned my son. I will no longer try to harm you, for you valued my life today. I have been a fool and very, very wrong” (see 1 Samuel 26, NLT).

David was eminently trustworthy, but Saul allowed foolish notions of imagined conspiracy to cloud his judgment. His intense jealousy over David’s exploits drove him to try to destroy the man whom God had chosen to succeed him as king.

Saul was a fool. He said so himself.

And you are a fool if, like Saul, you allow petty jealousies and trivial insults to embitter you. You are a fool, indeed, if you try to hunt down fleas and partridges in the wilderness instead of attending to the King’s business. And you are the king of fools if you distrust David’s Son; if you distrust the one Man who is true and faithful and absolutely trustworthy.

## Too much trust?

After Saul died, his son, Ishbosheth, was made king over Israel by General Abner. However, King Ishbosheth offended the

general. So great was Abner’s outrage at this insult that he traveled to Hebron, in the rival kingdom of Judah, with an offer to deliver the kingdom into David’s hands. This gesture pleased David, and he entered into an alliance with Abner.

When Joab, the general in David’s army, heard what had happened, he was furious. He believed that Abner had dealt treacherously with David, and so he sent a crafty message to Abner that David wanted to see him. When Abner returned to Hebron, Joab took him aside from his companions as if to deliver a secret message and stabbed him. Thus, Abner died because he trusted the wrong man.

At the general’s funeral David lamented, “Oh Abner, you died like a fool. You were not handcuffed, your feet were not in shackles. As a mighty warrior you understood the peril of trusting an enemy” (2 Samuel 3:33, 34).<sup>1</sup> In other words, *You lowered your guard. You died like a fool, Abner, because you trusted the wrong man.*

You may be a fool because you trust too much. You trust the used-car salesman who sells you a fine-looking car that turns out to be a bucket of troubles. You

believe your financial advisor who gives you “inside information” about investments and then the market tanks. And you are the king of fools when you trust your own self too much, when you arrogantly lean on your own understanding and rely on your own righteousness instead of acknowledging God and His Lordship in your life.

### What kind?

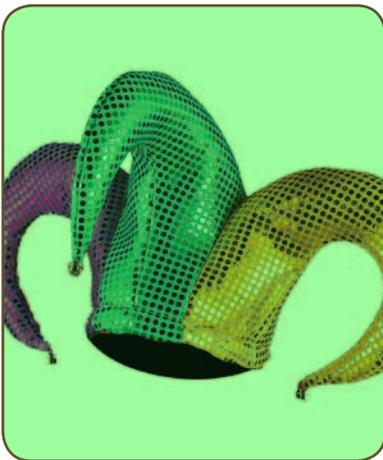
So, what kind of fool are you? Like one of the many kinds described in Scripture? Fools who make mischief? Fools who trouble their own

bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater.... But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee” (Luke 12:16–20).<sup>2</sup>

Strange, is it not, that this same Jesus, who warns us not to call each other fools, uses this invective Himself. He calls us fools when we choose eating and drinking and merry-making, and must-have toys instead of eternal life. Are you a pleasures-of-sin-for-a-season kind of fool? Are you a rich-and-increased-in-goods kind of fool in

ruler who, according to conventional wisdom, made the right choice to hold on to what he had. Why would anyone in his right mind want to exchange wealth and privilege for deprivation and tribulation? Yet, on the other hand, you have Paul’s unequivocal declaration that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. Paul insists that, “If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise” (1 Cor. 3:18, 19).

You are either a broad-way fool or a narrow-way fool. If you choose



households? Fools who meddle when they should mind their own business? Fools who make the same dumb mistakes over and over? Fools who think they can take fire into their bosoms and not be burned?

Or, are you a linger-longer fool, like David, who took a long and lingering look at a beautiful woman? Like him, do you linger longer when Bathsheba pops up on your computer screen?

### Maximum foolishness

If it is gross stupidity to be lured into sin by seduction, it is ultimate folly to banish God from your thinking. Jesus describes maximum foolishness this way. “The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to

need of nothing except to trash your old storage system and trade up to a multi-gigabyte supercomputer to house all your marvelous religious knowledge and spiritual insights? And yet, at the core of your being, are you a jaded, know-it-all fool whose manna has turned to corruption?

One can be a fool for different reasons. You can be a fool like Abner if you trust too much. You can be a fool like Saul if you don’t trust enough. You can be a bigger-barns fool whose sole purpose is to accumulate wealth and to enjoy a life of ease. Or you can be a religious fool who accumulates spiritual insights but lacks oil in your lamp.

### Broad or narrow way?

This is a puzzling paradox. On the one hand, you have the rich young

broad-way wisdom, God calls you a fool. If you choose narrow-way wisdom, the world calls you a fool. So what kind of fool will you be? Will you build on the shifting sands of worldly wisdom and be called foolish by God? Or will you build on the solid-rock wisdom of heaven and be called a fool by the world?

If you choose to be God’s fool, you can expect Him to ask you to do things that are folly in the eyes of the world. What if God calls you to be a preacher fool, to preach *Heaven’s foolishness*? Will you agree, or will you flee like Jonah? If you agree, will you be a preacher of foolish wisdom? Will you preach smooth things to soothe the itchy ears of people who disdain the truth? Or will you be a preacher of wise foolishness? Will you determine to preach nothing but Jesus Christ and Him

crucified *foolishness*, a stumbling block to the Jews and the Greeks?

### The fools on a hill

There was a fool on a hill one day. Friday's fool was a man on a cross, who, like Abner, listened to the crafty lies of the enemy, the one who was a liar from the beginning. Thus, he died like a fool.

There was another fool there; he had run with the wrong crowd, pushed his luck, and got nailed. Like the first fool on the cross, he cursed Christ and joined in the mocking chorus, "Come down from the cross

call Him *the greatest fool of all*—He, who, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:6–8). Bearing Adam's nakedness, He hung there, owning nothing at all, except a crown of thorns. In a world where the wise die rich, He died destitute.

He had a choice to be born.

will you be like the sinner-woman fool who blew her life-savings on perfume, on an alabaster box of ointment, to anoint the incomparable Man?

Or, will you be a linger-longer fool who looks and lusts? Or lingers longer on his knees when he hears the Lion's roar? Will you be a fool like Solomon, who turned his great wisdom into folly, who plunged into eating and drinking, into gluttony and debauchery and, in the end, declared that worldly wisdom is vanity, a chasing after the wind. Or will you be a Prince-Daniel fool who

THOUGH WE HAD NO CHOICE TO BE BORN  
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and we will believe!" Like the fool of long ago who distrusted David, so this doubt-filled fool distrusted David's Son.

But a curious change came over the faithless fool. Like two other fools who were slow to believe, he found his heart strangely warmed by Jesus. As the Light of the world shined into his mind, he came to see the utter folly of distrusting his only Hope. Impervious to the contempt and scorn of the mob, the faithful fool declared his absolute confidence in the cross-crushed Christ.

### Heavenly wisdom or divine folly?

What of that Man on the center cross? Some irreverent soul might

Knowing the gruesome end from the beginning, He chose to be born. We had no choice. We were born as fools, as enemies of God. So the question is not, *Am I a fool?* The real question is, *What kind of fool am I?* Though we had no choice to be born as fools, we do have a choice as to what kind of fools we will become.

### Choose wisely

When Christ calls you to be God's fool, will you be a run-away fool for Him? A run-away fool like Joseph? Will you be a fool like Potiphar's wanton wife who perfumed her bed with myrrh and cinnamon and her person with priceless fragrance to entice and beguile, to charm and allure, to tempt and ensnare? Or

shunned the eating and drinking scene and, at the risk of his life, maintained his integrity no matter what?

Will you be a self-congratulating fool like those self-promoting, ambitious disciples who argued over who would be the greatest, who were too proud to wash Jesus' feet? Or will you be like that humble woman who knelt down and drenched His feet with her tears and dried them with her hair?

We are all fools. No exceptions. The only question that remains for us is, *What kind?* ❏

<sup>1</sup> Author's interpretation of the verses.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, texts are from the King James Version.

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