

In Praise of Wisdom

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You know. You pick up your phone and you know it's going to happen. It's why you closed your bedroom door. If someone were looking over your shoulder, you would never click on that image or follow that link. If your parents read all of your posts and saw all of your pictures, you would never in a million years hit send. It's why you delete the search history. Folly doesn't like an audience.

We hide when we are going to commit an act of folly. We take extraordinary lengths to hide our tracks from our parents, our teachers, spouses, children, or anyone else that we know would be horrified by the sinful acts we are about to commit. If we could—and we wish we could—we would hide from ourselves. But there are two realities we cannot hide from; our conscience and our God. Listen to the early church father, Augustine:

“When you want to do something bad, you withdraw from the public and hide in your house where no enemy may see you; from those parts of the house that are open and visible you remove yourself to go into your own private room. But even here in your private chamber you fear guilt from some other direction, so you withdraw into your heart and there you meditate. But he is even more deeply inward than your heart. Hence, no matter where you flee, he is there. You would flee from yourself, would you? Will you not follow yourself wherever you flee? But since there is One even more deeply inward than yourself, there is no place where you may flee from an angered God except to a God who is pacified. There is absolutely no place for you to flee to. Do you want to flee from him? Rather flee to him.¹”

¹ Augustine, *Expositions on the Psalms*, on Ps. 94, cited in Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, volume 2, p170

This reveals the truth of God's omnipresence. God is there in that room with you. He is in the car when you are out with friends, when you are alone with your boyfriend on a date, and he is in your mind when you think those thoughts of hatred, envy, or lust. "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?" (Ps. 139:7).

Folly is acting, speaking, or walking in a way that is contrary to God's law. God's word is clear about what he forbids and what he approves. Folly is identifiable by that which you try to keep hidden. If your first instinct is to keep an act hidden, beware, folly is at the door. The problem is that it can be so easy to hide things from your parents! You marvel at times at how naïve they are when they pick up your phone and look at your search history, which you just 10 minutes ago cleaned out. Or, "I don't even have that app, Mom!" failing to mention that you deleted it a few minutes before, and you plan on reinstalling it as soon as you get your phone back.

But God knows. And Jesus Christ, the One who dwells within you knows as well. As those who are bought with the precious blood of Christ, wonder of wonders, we now enjoy union with Christ. "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, *but Christ liveth in me*" (Gal. 2:20). How foolish to think we can hide our folly from one who dwells within us.

Not only is folly sin, but it is also painful. It caused Adam to hide when he heard God's voice in the garden, and it cost him fellowship with his God (Gen. 3:8). It is what cost Nabal his life and caused his wife Abigail to say, "Nabal is his name and folly is with him" (1 Sam. 25:25). Rehoboam lost half of his kingdom and earned for himself the sobriquet "ample in folly" for all of history because of his foolishness (1 Kings 12).

Perhaps you, young reader, have experienced the pain of folly in your life. You have never met a "bear robbed of her whelps," but you have met the painful, real-life equivalent (Prov. 17:12). The vows that your father took "never to forsake her" didn't seem to mean much when he abandoned you and your mother for that other woman. This is folly writ large. Adulterers do not inherit the kingdom of God, yet

your father plunges himself into adultery. Jesus says a man is worse than an infidel if he doesn't care for his children, yet your father does his best to destroy his children. Does this man have the magic elixir that offers him eternal life here on this earth? Man's days are like the grass, so it will not be long before he faces the God whose law he has trampled underfoot. When a man acts in this reckless fashion, there is no other word to describe it than folly.

This is to say nothing of the monstrous folly of the churches that embrace these adulterers and adulteresses who flee to them, crying to them "peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14).

Young person, you can cause immense pain to your parents and families as well with your foolish acts. Rarely does folly only affect the one acting foolishly. There is pain that is fleeting and soon forgotten. "I told you not to play ball in the house!" There is the pain that can last, as when one disregards the rules of home and school. And then there is the pain that lasts a lifetime, and beyond. As when a child marries against his parent's clear instruction, the marriage ends in divorce, and soon enough there is another young lady on the horizon. Why? Because "he shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly shall he go astray" (Prov. 5:23). Folly ignores wise counsel and pursues the way that is "right in his own eyes" (Prov. 12:15).

Folly is not the way that God intends for his people to walk. Solomon shows us the better way: "Then I saw that wisdom excelleth folly, as far as light excelleth darkness" (Eccl. 2:13). Wisdom is rightly applying all of our knowledge and understanding and pressing it into the service of our King, living a life pleasing to him and of service to our neighbor.

Augustine pointed us on the right path; turn to God. Flee to God! His word, which is a "lamp unto [our] feet, and a light unto [our] path" (Ps. 119:105) will expose the snares and the traps that the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh have laid for us. God's word will cause the "prudent to understand his way" and will cause them "[to be] crowned with knowledge" (Prov. 14:8, Prov. 14:18). We turn to God when we pray unto him for wisdom and understanding and ask him to send us his Spirit to guide and preserve

us on our way. Don't you see the need to ask him to preserve us from the pits into which we would willingly, joyfully, and repeatedly plunge ourselves were it not for his preserving hand (Prov. 15:21)?

Folly caused Adam to flee from the voice of God. Jesus Christ, who is "made unto us wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:30), draws us near to God in the bonds of love and fellowship so that we need not fear that voice any longer. When we walk in the way of wisdom, rejecting folly and its allurements, we walk in the way of Christ, in whom our life is hid (Col. 3:3).

Have you been foolish? Does it fill you with shame and regret? Are you embarrassed at the pain and hurt you have caused others? Then turn from your folly to Jesus Christ, the one who gave himself to the death of the cross for you. It is the preaching of that cross that is "to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). You need to look away from self, turn to God, and take hold of the truth of the "power of God" which is Christ crucified. In Christ, you will find the wisdom, discretion, and prudence to avoid the foolish way. And when you fall, when at night you kneel next to your bed and with tears running down your face confess the sinful acts you have committed, turn to Jesus. Cry out to that crucified, and now risen Lord Jesus Christ for he is "able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25).

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