

Wisdom and Foolishness

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Over the last few weeks, our family has been watching the *Jurassic Park* movies (the first will always be the best). If you know anything about the movies, you know that people keep making the same mistakes over and over again. They think they can bring dinosaurs back from extinction, take numerous safety precautions, and everything be fine. But there's running and screaming and people being eaten. They try it again and there is more running and screaming and people being eaten. They try it yet again, and there is more running and screaming and people being eaten. They're foolish, and they don't learn their lesson.

Albert Einstein is (probably anecdotally) credited with saying, "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results." While that's not technically true, and while there is great value in trying and trying again and not giving up, the point the anecdote is trying to make is that if you keep doing the exact same things over and over, with no changes, then you're likely to get the same negative results.

It's easy to sit in our easy chair and criticize the people in the movies for making those stupid mistakes over and over, but if we stop and think about it, haven't we all done the same, especially when it comes to our spiritual life? We know what God's word says, we read the admonitions and warnings that are given throughout the scripture, we're familiar with the stories of those in Bible times who didn't heed God's messages, and we see the consequences of their actions. And then we go out and do the same things. Remember the "definition" of insanity?

One of the terms used for the Exodus generation of Israelites is "stiff-necked". It means they refused to be turned or moved. They were stubborn. Stubborn as a mule. They didn't listen to God and suffered exactly the consequences God said they'd suffer as a result. We, my fellow brethren, cannot afford to be stiff-necked.

The opposite would be to be pliable, moldable, teachable, willing to be listen to instruction.

There are numerous excellent proverbs that speak to these two choices of behavior. Solomon puts it simply: one is a fool, and the other is wise.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1:7).

"The wise in heart will receive commands, but a prating fool will fall" (Prov. 10:8).

"He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, but he who refuses correction goes astray" (Prov. 10:17).

"Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid" (Prov. 12:1).

"The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise" (Prov. 12:15).

In Isaiah's message against the people of Judah who refused to obey, he used the illustration of a potter and the clay:

“Woe to those who seek deep to hide their counsel far from the Lord, and their works are in the dark; they say, ‘Who sees us?’ and, ‘Who knows us?’ Surely you have things turned around! Shall the potter be esteemed as the clay; for shall the thing made say of him who made it, ‘He did not make me’? Or shall the thing formed say of him who formed it, ‘He has no understanding’?” (Isaiah 29:15-16)

It's absurd to think of the clay as being above the potter who formed it and refusing to accept the potter's authority over it. And so it is with us when we think we can keep resisting God's laws, keep doing what we want, and in effect proclaim ourselves superior to the God who created us! It's foolish. And no matter how often we keep resisting and not listening, it's not going to change the consequences of our foolish behavior.

God knows what's best for us. His laws reflect that knowledge. Instead of being stiff-necked and foolish, let's accept what we know deep down inside is the truth and yield to his instruction and say to him, “Mold me and make me, after your will.” That's wisdom. And that's the way to eternal life.

Wisdom and eternal life or foolishness and destruction. Which will you choose?