

# Fearing, Departing, Raging or Confidence

*Proverbs 14:16*

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*“A wise man feareth, and departeth from evil: but the fool rageth and is confident.” – Proverbs 14:16 (Cf. 12:15; 22:3).*

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Once again we see Solomon, reputedly the wisest man who ever lived, teaching us about the difference between one who behaves in a wise fashion and one who conducts oneself in a foolish way. As is the case in many of instances in which this kind of language is used, it is the relationship and of the one that is object and their relationship and interaction with God that is compared with one who has no such relationship. Just to take note, this particular verse is talking about the “wrong way” of handling the matters that confront people in life. It is not the only place in the Scriptures where such a “wrong way” of proceeding yields bad result. We’ll not develop these other examples but simply mention them:

- There is the example of Nabal who proceeded on a terrible direction setting himself against King David in 1 Sam. 25:36-37.
- There is the example of Solomon (the writer here!) himself in 1 King 11:1-8 and Eccl. 2:2, pursuing literally HUNDREDS on foreign wives which resulted quite a number sinful result, most serious being the embracing of foreign gods.
- Of course, there is the example of Belshazzar in Daniel 5 where he had a great and lively feast which allowed the MedoPersians to have opportunity they ought not have had.
- Likewise there is the example of the Israelites themselves in Amos 6:3-7 who indulged themselves and reaped the results of that indulgence.
- Of course we also remember the example of Judas (Acts 1:25) who is cited and reaping the result of his own self service.

The overall point here is that IF anyone wants to conduct himself/herself in a Godly and wise fashion, he/she ought to see to it that at least the two things that Solomon cites are a part of their everyday behavior:

- “Fearing” the Lord is a common idea here in the Book of Proverbs as well as pretty much in the entirety of the rest of the OT. It speaks of esteeming and considering the desire, person and will of God in higher and more important fashion than our personal and individual desire and priorities.
- “Departing” speaks of separation, of the creation of a gap between what Solomon speaks of as “evil” and everyday life. Evil is what we might call sin or what is displeasing and/or disobedience to God. Notice also that there is the sense that this “departing” speaks of one that is an ongoing matter. It is not just a statement or setting of one’s purpose to

do the thing. It is the setting of that purpose, yes, but it is also the ongoing work that carries that purpose into being.

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Now, Solomon says that the “Fool”, on the other hand; instead of esteeming the Lord by fearing Him and seeing to it that there is a real separation between the individual and sinful behavior, is one with what we could call very, very “human-centered” behavior or attitudes.

- To “rage” speaks of the idea of uncontrolled human anger. There is also the implication that the anger, at least the extent of that anger is unjustified.
- Secondly, he says that the fool is “confident”, saying that the fool is satisfied and/or thinks that he is justified in that rage and is not accountable is what is going on in his heart and mind.

Of course, the implication here is that what is spoken of in the second phrase is set over and against what is in the first phrase. Note that the second idea is separated from the first with what is known as a “contrastive” conjunction. We all know that the conjunction connects one idea with another. The “contrastive” conjunction, on the other hand, sets the two phrase against one another idea wise.

Here then, what we saw in the first phrase, fearing God and departing from evil should be seen as over and against what Solomon says can be understood as raging and being confident or content with ones’ mental/emotional situation. The first is a positive and God-pleasing condition. The second is exactly the opposite.

To conclude and summarize the interpretation of the passage - A wise man, through fear of God and of the consequences of a false step, will start back when advised of danger, or return from a perilous course on which he may have entered. The fool, on the other hand, will betray his folly by boldly rushing on in headlong self-sufficiency, and even upbraiding those who would keep him back from ruin.

As always, there are a number of illustrations to which we can look to help us to understand:

- Lot showed wisdom at last in escaping from the judgment which his sons-in-law, seeing no signs of it, laughed to scorn.
- Goliath raged and was confident, while rushing on to his own destruction.
- Rehoboam acted the part of a madman when, in his arrogance, despising wise counsels, he threatened those he should have conciliated.

- Naaman began by acting foolishly when he was ready to turn away from Jordan in a rage, but, listening to counsel, proved himself wise in the end.
- Sennacherib, like a madman, defying the God of Israel, precipitated his own downfall.
- The obstinate incredulity of Gedaliah, in the teeth of warning, made it impossible to save him from assassination (Jer. 40; 41).
- How earnestly does Peter, taught by sad experience, inculcate in his old age the wisdom of holy fear (1 Pet. 1:17; 5:5, etc.)!

Just to think by way of application – let’s think about just what self-confidence imposes upon the world. By arrogant impetuosity men have pushed their way to high places. But the proportion of those who thus succeed is probably very small compared with those who fail. And in many instances, it would be found, where the success appeared due to presumption, that there was more prudence and caution and management in the background than was acknowledged. At any rate, it may be laid down as a rule that, in temporal matters, he will be most prosperous who is least rash, who weighs matters instead of deciding off-hand, is willing to hear opinions, and to retrace a false step if made. Whereas, he who resents the laws of prudence, and would rather be wrong in his own way than right in another’s, will make many a grave mistake. Still more is this true with regard to the things eternal. A holy dread of displeasing God, and of the consequences of sin, - this is wisdom. And the fruit of this will be a prayerful spirit of dependence upon God for direction, a humble self-mistrust, a modest deference to the wisdom and experience of those who are competent and authorized to teach. In this spirit evil will be escaped and salvation wrought out (Phil. 2:12). While the heady and high-minded, giving the reins to his passions, rejecting counsel, and persisting in his own way, will confess as well as prove himself a fool at last. For “*he who lives without fear shall die without hope.*”