

Foolishness And Cleansing

Foolishness IS sin, and must be atoned for

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Most of us have a fascination with risk-takers. These are those people who "push the envelope." We look at them and wonder if they're going to make it. They are the daredevils, the Evil Kneivels, who put their lives on the line to make a buck and become famous. Maybe the word to be used here would be "infamous." I don't know which it is.

Extreme sports have become popular in the last fifteen or so years. People push themselves to the limit of their physical and mental endurance, whether it's swimming, bicycling, skiing, running, or whatever which people do for a variety of personal reasons. Others involve themselves in skydiving, bungee-jumping. Even each new ride at the amusement parks becomes more violent, pushing the "G-forces" to pressures that rival those that are experienced in automobile crashes and rocket rides into space.

Risk-taking is not limited to athletic and entertainment-based activities. People who are not athletic at all, by any stretch of the imagination, are involved. The person may be a bookworm—a horned-rimmed class nerd milquetoast. The risk-taker might be 85 years old with silver-blue hair, and be a great, great grandmother, but she pushes the envelope by foolishly gambling in other areas of life. The gamble might be with one's health. It might be at the game tables at Las Vegas. It might be in the stock market, or it might be with eternal life.

This is because risk-taking, gambling, laying a bet (which things God calls "foolishness") is a driving force. It is an ever-present motivation to achieve some desire of human nature. Gambling forces its will on even those who know the truth, and it moves us to ignore truth in the pursuit of whatever it covets. The Bible reveals this element (that is in all of us) right at the very beginning of the book, through God's report of Adam and Eve's sin. God told

them the truth, and there is *nobody* more trustworthy than God. He said, "You may eat the fruit of this and that. You may **not** eat the fruit of that tree or you are as good as dead."

There was nothing unclear about any of His instructions to them, but they pushed the truth aside and foolishly gambled with their lives. They *ate* of that one tree anyway. They were booted out of the garden, and they lost direct contact with their Creator (who is the Author of truth), and they died.

Let's take a look at Proverbs 10:23. I want you to think of yourself in regard to this.

Proverbs 10:23 It is as sport to a fool to do mischief: but a man of understanding has wisdom.

The Jewish Commentary—the *Soncino*—comments: "To the fool gambling is like an amusement." It reveals his moral superficiality. It is saying that the fool has no deep sense of what he is doing.

Last Sabbath we heard a sermon on wisdom ["Christ Our Wisdom"]. Is it wisdom to gamble? Are you, too, a gambler—foolishly ignoring wisdom by convincing yourself that it's more important to have fun, to have sports maybe while you're still young? Do you take risks through ignorance, or by convincing yourself that there is still enough time to repent at a more convenient time or pace later on? Have you convinced yourself that prudence is less important than amusement? There are a lot of people now dead who had the same kind of thoughts, and they no longer have the opportunity to make amends, to change their lives, and not to ignore even common sense.

There is a street in our subdivision where Evelyn and I live that is, time-wise, a shortcut between two much-more-heavily-traveled roads. You should see the speeds that people travel on that street even though the speed limit is only 25 mph. It had been 35 mph up until just a couple of months ago, but it was lowered to 25 mph. But I think you know that if the speed limit is 35 mph people are going to convince themselves that it is okay for *them* to go 40 or 45 mph. Because they give themselves permission to break the law, the city decided to lower the limit.

There are also two stop signs on that street placed in an effort to slow people down, but people simply ignore them, and some literally roar through them hardly turning a head, because they are bent on achieving a gain of what cannot be greater than mere seconds of time as they rush toward their goal. I am sure that the residents have complained, because often in the past there were police cars with officers placed and planted in areas from time to time, giving out traffic citations. Radar units have been placed there with large neon signs warning people how fast they are going.

Most recently speed humps were added to the street. The speed humps seem to have done more good toward slowing people down than all of the other measures combined, because the people are fearful of tearing up the undercarriage of their automobile. Now why does the potential for loss have to be so obvious that people will then obey before they die?

These people are gambling with children's lives because there is also an elementary school in the subdivision, and children are walking to school on those streets at the very time the speeders are going to work in the morning. As you now know, it is dark in the morning when they're going to school. Maybe their risk-taking did not take *theirs*, or another person's life—yet!

Let's ignore the "death and injury" possibility for just a moment, because there are two things everyone of us risk-takers loses every time we foolishly make the wrong choice. Before we do that I want to show you something that continually impresses me about Jesus. John 20:1-7 is describing a small portion of the resurrection event.

John 20:5-7 And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying: yet went he not in. Then came Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and saw the linen clothes lie. And the napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

The margin says that it was "*folded* by itself." Think of this. Here was Jesus, resurrected as God. It was the most awesome thing that this earth has ever seen since the creation, and here is this supremely powerful and important Being, just resurrected from the dead, and He does the godly thing. He neatly

folded that napkin and laid it on the table that He was lying on. Jesus was neat, and yet He was humble enough to do the loving thing.

So many of us in our vanity take off our clothing and carelessly drop them where they are, leaving them for other *lesser* beings to come along and take care of us and our things. That's the result of foolish child-training, and its ripple effect has a potential for disastrous results in other areas of life.

Romans 13:8 Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loves another has fulfilled the law.

What Jesus did there in folding that cloth was an act of love.

Romans 13:9-14 For this, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, You shall not covet: and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love works no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put you on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.

What are the two things that we lose? It's time and the opportunity to do things right. Can we argue against, or can we truly justify the fact that we are letting time and opportunity on every occasion to be foolishly gambled away—the opportunity to show God that we understand what life is all about? Is it love for these people to speed through our neighborhood, putting children at risk by their carelessness? Carelessness, because they are consumed with what *they* want to do, which is to save a couple of seconds.

Is it love toward God and fellowman when we put ourselves and others at risk by putting off the opportunity each day presents us to do the right thing?

Acting out of love is the opposite of being foolish. It is **not** gambling. Love is defined as "keeping the commandments of God," and sin as "breaking the commandments." Sin is gambling. Sin is foolishness, and to do so is especially dangerous to those who are not ignorant of things and should know better what to do. We are not ignorant. In our attempts to gamble away our future, it can easily be judged as a rebellious defiling of the name of God that we bear as His children.

Paul used the word "sleep." When one is asleep he is unaware, insensitive to what is going on around one. I'm going to paraphrase what Paul said. He said, "*Let us not be unfeeling and thoughtless about God's demands and what is going on in our lives.*" Each opportunity to do things right is important, and we have been lovingly warned by God, and He tells us that "our sins will find us out." He tells us that "what we reap we shall sow."

How many times have you said to your children, "How many times do I have to tell you?" God has recorded **thousands** of years of history, and has given us an almost over-whelming number of examples of "cause and effect" from our ancestors' lives. How much proof does He have to give us that it doesn't pay to gamble against the workings of law? Proverbs 14:12 says, "There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

Everyone of us has seen this principle that I'm talking about right now at work in our children, and it becomes especially clear as they go through their teen years. They begin pushing the envelope in a much more forceful, apparent way. They may rebel against the common-sense wisdom of their parents by calling them old-fashioned fuddy-duddies, or "*Mom, you're out of it.*" That's their vanity speaking. What they're saying is, "I don't need your advice. I know more than you." That, in principle, is **exactly** what Adam and Eve did.

Instead of Adam and Eve listening to the wisdom of their Parent, they followed the counsel of their foolish friend Satan, who promised them excitement without restriction. By doing things *his* way, he said they would have power and freedom to really be *with it*. But instead, they died, and the promises of God were unfilled in their lives because they foolishly gambled them away.

Jesus used the term "fool" in direct connection to the sin of covetousness.

Luke 12:13-21 And one of the company said unto him, Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me. And he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge [or a divider] over you? And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, 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 bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have much goods laid up for many years, take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry, But God said unto him, *You fool*, this night your soul shall be required of you: then whose shall these things be, which you have provided? So is he that lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.

Covetousness is the subject here and how the man used his time, ignoring God in his pursuit of other things, which was security and ease of living, which Jesus called "foolish." Foolishness is more serious than merely being dumb. It is part and parcel of the sin of covetousness, because it is in pursuing our desires that we are most likely to act foolishly and imprudently. Our minds are zeroed in on what *we* want to do.

I think that everyone of us who drives an automobile ought to be able to see that if we lose our focus, lose our attention while driving, that is when we are most likely to get into a wreck. Our minds wander, and we're not aware of what's going on around us, and so we will go too fast, or go through a stop sign or a red light, or we will drift into another lane, or we will fail to dodge and get out of the way of somebody who is coming toward us. This is because we're not concentrating on what we should be doing.

Proverbs 12:15 The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkens unto counsel is wise.

I spent a large portion of my life driving, and I've seen a lot, and I've spent time thinking about what I've observed in others and have done myself on occasions. I have concluded that there are very few true accidents, and that what we call "accidents" all contain within them a fair amount (and in some cases a *large* measure) of deliberateness that causes the accident.

In our vanity we deliberately break speed laws. We deliberately avoid repairing our cars. We convince ourselves that we are above the law, and therefore above the law of averages. The deliberateness is clearly shown when one buys radar-detecting devices, because one knows one is planning to break the law. This is utterly foolish in the eyes of God, as if we can somehow convince ourselves that God doesn't see us.

What do you think our pushing the envelope tells God about our character, and how we would conduct ourselves in His kingdom? Well, He might say, "I see we have another little Satan on our hands." That's what Satan did. He pushed the envelope, and eventually gambled that he could actually defeat God in a war.

When I looked up the word "fool" in my dictionary, the very first usage given was: "A person who acts unwisely and imprudently." When I looked for synonyms of "foolish," believe it or not my dictionary had between 75 and 80 of them, and the very first series of six contained the words *senseless*, *imprudent*, and *unwise*.

God has devoted an entire book of succinct easily-remembered aphorisms to act as guides to protect us from foolishness, from gambling with our lives and calling, with injury, death, and sin. It is Proverbs. In fact a whole section of the Bible, including Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon, is generally referred to as "*The Wisdom Books*."

Proverbs 1:1-6 The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding: To receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity; To give subtlety to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion. A wise man will hear, and will

increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels: To understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings.

Back in 1960 when the Spokesmen's Clubs were being organized in what was then the Radio Church of God, I heard a speech given by a man who was the principal of a high school in southeastern Ohio. His name is Ken Christopher. He later became an elder, and to the best of my knowledge he is with United, somewhere in that area. He said, "Never read a book without reading and understanding the preface, because it is the author's *Specific Purpose Statement*." It gives the reason *why* the book was written so that later on the author can tell the reasons why he believes what he is saying is true.

These verses that we just read are God's *Specific Purpose Statement* for the book of Proverbs, and the first thing that is addressed is *wisdom*. You will notice in verse 2 it says, "to know wisdom," and in verse 3 it says, "To receive the instruction of wisdom." He did not repeat the same word. Those two words translated "wisdom" are not the same in Hebrew. The word in verse 2 is closely related to our word "skill." Within the context of the book it means "skill in living" or "right application." In verse 3 the word means "wise behavior," "wise dealing," or "good sense," and it points toward such things as being discreet, kind, clever, merciful, tactful, and so forth, depending upon the context in which it appears. So it's a bit more specific than the first word.

In verse 2, the word "instruction" points to "practical experience learned as lessons for moral discipline." This is not classroom instruction God is talking about. He is talking about things learned in *the school of hard knocks*. The word "understanding" refers to being able to discern between what is true and false, good and bad, what matters most, and what doesn't matter at all.

In verse 3, the word "justice" is in reality the word we use today as "righteousness." That word "judgment" means "right doing," and it deals with legal issues, with conformity to God's law. The word "judgment" is another legal term, and it refers to a judge's verdict. It too points to right behavior. The word "equity" refers to fairness in one's dealings with others.

In verse 4, the word "subtlety" is prudence, which is the opposite of "foolish." The "simple" in verse 4 are the naïve, and these people are really pitiful in this book. They are open to virtually any influence, and they are among the most-addressed in the whole book.

The word "knowledge" is the apprehension of reality. It is *understanding* truth. This is good to know, because people, regardless of their high I.Q. can be told or shown truth, and they don't get it. In this book they would have no knowledge, even though they knew reams of material about glaciers, or something like that. These people *don't* know, despite their high I.Q. What we need to understand in relation to this book is that God's truth is reality.

The word "discretion" refers to the power of formulating and carrying out right measures. This too is very important to this subject because far too many do not really think things through, and ignore cause and effect. They fail to seek the truth, fail to seek counsel, are impatient, and thus reach wrong conclusions, and instead rush into circumstances where angels fear to tread. Proverbs would say "they are not discreet."

In verse 5 it states that even those normally considered wise among men can learn from this book. This is because the sayings in this book are from God, who is the ultimate in wisdom. In verse 6 it is stated that the overall purpose is that we might understand puzzling and thought-provoking things about life. Each of these terms, though they are all related within the context of this book, are also specific to some area.

Let's take this one step further—to whom this book is written? The Bible is not written to the world, but rather it is God's gift to those who have made the covenant with Him. It was first given to Israel under the Old Covenant, and then the church becomes "the Israel of God" under the New Covenant. It was not until the church was formed that the Bible was made available in its present complete form, so I think that we can safely say that most directly it is God's gift to the church under the New Covenant. Israel never had the whole Bible. More directly, it is "the word of God" *to* those who have made the covenant with Him. I want you to notice first to whom God is speaking.

Proverbs 1:8 My *son* , hear the instruction of your father.

Proverbs 1:10 My *son* , if sinners entice you.

Proverbs 2:1 My *son* , if you will receive my words.

Proverbs 3:1 My *son* , forget not my law.

Proverbs 3:11 My *son* , despise not the chastening of the LORD.

Proverbs 3:21 My *son* , let not them depart from your eyes.

Proverbs 4:1 Hear, *you children* , the instruction of a father.

Proverbs 4:10 Hear, O my *son* , and receive my sayings.

Proverbs 4:20 My *son* , attend to my words.

Proverbs 5:1 My *son* , attend unto my wisdom.

Proverbs 6:1 My *son* , if you be surety for your friend.

I don't believe we need to go any further. We've only scratched the surface on this. The case is made. It is written to God's children. But I do want to take it yet one step further. Turn to Proverbs 2:15.

Proverbs 22:15 Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him.

I think that there is a tendency in all of us to carelessly assume that this is directed only at *our* children, but please change your thinking or we will not get the most we possibly can from this instruction. We are to understand first and foremost that foolishness is bound in *OUR* hearts. Our children are only a secondary interest as far as this book is concerned. It's a matter of comparison. Undoubtedly our children have more foolishness bound in their hearts when compared to us (their parents) who have far more experience and skill in living rightly than our children do. But our comparison is to be made against the wisdom of our *Spiritual Father* , who has lived *eternally* , and we are to be humbled, instructed, and corrected.

The word "fool" in its various forms appears 60 times in the book of Proverbs alone. That certainly indicates to me that God considers this an important subject for His children to understand so that they might be able to avoid foolishness's tragic consequences.

Proverbs 22:3 A prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

This proverb does not mention foolishness, but it does mention "prudence," which in this case implies "caution." It also mentions "simple." "The *simple* are those who pass on." The "simple" are the naïve, and they are open to any influence, any whim of the moment. This proverb succinctly points out a major root of a fool's problem. Fools are persuaded by vanity or impulse to act without discretion, not thinking things through. If it feels good, they are very likely to do whatever *it* is they want to do, at the moment, because they are unwary and non-critical. The "simple" blunder into trouble and pain, and sometimes outright danger and death.

Proverbs 22:15, which we just left, says that one of the solutions to that problem is discipline. But one has to ask the question: Why suffer the pain of discipline? Why not just avoid being foolish? Why not be patient, humbly seeking counsel from God, from His word, and from those who are more experienced? Everything we feel or anticipate doesn't have to be done.

Proverbs 7:7 And [I] beheld among the simple ones [the naïve—those who are driven by impulse and whim], I discerned among the youths a young man void of understanding.

I think I just chose that verse because it shows that the "simple" are void of understanding. They may see truth, but they don't get it. They miss the reality of what they're getting involved in.

Proverbs 10:8 The wise in heart will receive commandments: but a prating fool shall fall.

Proverbs 10:10 He that winks with the eye [a person who is great at practical jokes] causes sorrow; but a prating fool shall fall.

Proverbs 10:21 The lips of the righteous feed many: but fools die for a want [a lack] of wisdom.

All three of these verses in chapter 10 have something in common. I could have chosen many more, but I just took these because they were all in the same chapter and easy to cover. In all three, punishment falls right on the heels of foolishness. Look at verse 18.

Proverbs 10:18 He that hides hatred with lying lips, and he that utters a slander, is a fool.

Here foolishness is again directly linked to a sin. Jesus linked it directly to covetousness. Here it is linked to slander. Sin is the ultimate in foolishness, and when foolishness is committed the chances are extremely high that pain is going to follow right on the heels. "The prating fool shall fall." "*The prating fool shall fall* ." He doubles the warning that there is going to be pain if you do that foolish thing with your tongue. "Prating" is related to speaking. Now we're talking about slander. Slander would be an example of prating, but not necessarily all prating is slander. On the other hand, He also says right in this same book, "In a multitude of words there is no lack of sin." It is foolish to be prating, and so even a lot of talking is foolish, and pain is going to follow.

Now why is foolishness a sin even though law-breaking may not be directly involved? It is because of not living up to the godly standard—the *God* - family standard. Since we bear His name, and since we are His children, God has standards by which He wants His children to conduct themselves, and "playing the fool" is not living up to the standard, because God is not a fool and He doesn't want any of His children to be a fool.

Foolishness is a failure to hit the mark of our high calling in Christ Jesus. It is "falling short of the glory of God." Foolish children do not glorify God's name. As this book also says, "Even a child is known by his doings." The implication is whether he is foolish, or a wise child. At the age of twelve, Jesus was already considered *wise* by adults, and they sat around listening to *Him* —a 12-year old, teaching them about the word of God!

Let's go now to Proverbs 24:9. Hang your hat on this one.

Proverbs 24:9 The *thought* of foolishness is sin: and the scorner is an abomination to men.

The word "thought" here can be translated as "planning" and it is so in some modern translations. When you're planning, you're thinking, aren't you? The *King James* is maybe a little bit broader as to the circumstance, but nonetheless it is still a correct translation. God really examines us. Do you know why? Because out of thinking comes conduct, and the place to stop the sin is in the mind before it ever happens. Since the planning eventually shows itself on the outside in the sin, it is directly connected to sin, and therefore even the planning is sin.

Ecclesiastes 7:25 I applied my heart to know and to search, and to seek out wisdom, and the reason of things, and to know the wickedness of *folly*, even of foolishness and madness.

Am I convincing you that foolishness is bad? I hope I am. It's not something to be played around with. I won't go into detail in the New Testament and what it says about foolishness, but I will remind us of a few things. The five virgins in Matthew 25 who were not prepared for the Bridegroom's coming are termed as "foolish." The person who builds his house on the sand is called "foolish." Those who worship idols are described by Paul in Romans 1 as "foolish." The Galatians who allowed themselves to be deceived and bewitched are called "foolish" by Paul. Jesus called the two men on the road to Emmaus (to which He had to explain the scriptures regarding His crucifixion and resurrection) *fools* . He said, "You fools, and slow of heart." *These* were two of His disciples.

Foolishness is no minor weakness. It leads to sin, and it *is* sin. It produces nothing profitable. Its primary fruits are pain and death. We are urged at least ten times in the New Testament to "*think soberly* ."

Now why am I concerned about this subject on the Day of Atonement? It is because the Day of Atonement is the day observed to make us most aware that we are cleansed of all defilement. This is why observant Jews celebrate

it as the holiest day of the year. Holiness is the opposite of being adulterated, corrupted, defiled, contaminated, and thus profane. Do you know what the original "profane" meant? Profane means "*far from the Temple*." The Temple is where God is. Anybody who is profane is far from Him, and so somebody who is adulterated, corrupted, defiled, contaminated and unclean, is profane. Holiness is purity and quality in every area of life, so much so that one is set apart. They are a "cut above" others simply because one is perceived as being clean, and such a one is acceptable in God's presence. Foolishness is every bit as defiling, and sometimes even dangerous physically, as much more obvious sin.

The underlying instruction in everything in the Bible concerning "clean and unclean" is to keep one free from *spiritual* defilement, and if one becomes defiled, to *clean* oneself so that they are no longer defiled. This is because those defiled by sin are not acceptable in God's presence. Foolishness is defiling.

The instruction gleaned from the symbolism of the Day of Atonement is very helpful in understanding this when it is combined with an understanding gleaned from the "clean and unclean" laws and the sin offerings given customarily throughout the remainder of the year. We're not going to have the time to go through the "clean and unclean" laws because there are a lot of them. It's more than just food. There is a great deal more to it.

Obedience to all those laws was a very rigorous requirement, and God had them go through it so that they would learn how important it is to be clean; to be clean *bodily*, but to be clean in our minds, and clean in our conduct, and clean in our attitudes, because *uncleanness* will not be acceptable to God. So obedience to those laws was a very rigorous requirement. In the end it proved to be an impossibility for them to do, and it would be an impossibility for us.

This impossibility accords perfectly with spiritual defilement from sin. It's everywhere! The whole world is leavened, and we are coming in contact with it constantly. But it is our responsibility to keep it from becoming part of us. We have to exercise the discipline and self-control *rigorously* to keep it from defiling us by our participation in it.

Now it's impossible for us to pay the penalty of sin and still have acceptance before God, because we would be dead. Do the dead come before God? No. The living. The solution is to begin overcoming foolishness by first being cleansed by the blood of the Lamb. His vicarious sacrifice in our behalf enables us to be cleansed. It makes us acceptable in God's presence and enables God's purpose to go on to His intended conclusion.

Let's turn to the book of Leviticus. In Leviticus 4 is the subject of the sin offerings.

Leviticus 4:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a soul shall sin through ignorance against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which ought not to be done, and shall do against any of them:

Verse 3 talks about the priest and what he has to do if he is the one who sins. It goes through that, and then verse 13 says:

Leviticus 4:13 And if the whole congregation of Israel sin through ignorance, and the thing be hid from the eyes of the assembly, and they have done somewhat against any of the commandments of the LORD concerning things which should not be done, and are guilty.

We have now those of us who sin individually, and if the whole congregation (the whole church) sins.

Leviticus 4:22 When a ruler has sinned, and done somewhat through ignorance against any of the commandments of the LORD his God concerning things which should not be done, and is guilty.

Everybody is involved.

Leviticus 5:1-6 And if a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he has seen or known of it; if he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity. Or if a soul touch any unclean thing, whether it be a carcass of an unclean beast, or a carcass of unclean cattle, or the carcass of unclean creeping things,

and if it be hidden from him; he also shall be unclean, and guilty. Or if he touch the uncleanness of man, whatsoever uncleanness it be that a man shall be defiled withal, and it be hid from him; when he knows of it, then he shall be guilty. Or if a soul swear, pronouncing with his lips to do evil, or to do good, whatsoever it be that a man shall pronounce with an oath, and it be hid from him; when he knows of it, then he shall be guilty in one of these. And it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that he has sinned in that thing: And he shall bring his trespass offering unto the LORD for his sin which he has sinned, a female from the flock, a lamb or a kid of the goats, for a sin offering; and the priest shall make an atonement for him concerning his sin.

All of those things mentioned, whether the priest, whether it was the people, whether it was the king, whether it was included in these specific things that are mentioned in Leviticus 5:1-6, they all required the forgiveness of sin. Every single one of them, whether the people knew it or not, or whether you knew it or not, was an act of foolishness. It is always foolish to sin.

I want you to notice a contrast.

Numbers 15:27-31 And if any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering. And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul that sins ignorantly, when he sins by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him: and it shall be forgiven him. You shall have one law for him that sins through ignorance, both for him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourns among them. But the soul that does ought presumptuously, whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproaches the LORD: and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. [That can mean death.] Because he has despised the word of the LORD, and has broken his commandment, that soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him.

There is no forgiveness. The word translated "ignorance," which includes those sins we read in Leviticus 4 and 5, are in contrast to the word

"presumptuously" that is given in verse 30 of Numbers 15, and it deserves a brief comment.

The difference between the two words is primarily one of attitude in the person committing the sin. You will notice that sometimes in chapters 4 and 5 the person, for a while, didn't even know that he did it. Then when the knowledge came that he did, then he confessed his sin and he made the offering. He was guilty.

"Presumptuously" though indicates defiance. It literally means "with a raised fist." The word "ignorance" or "ignorantly" lacks that force to indicate an error. That error may involve very serious consequences, but what was done, though involving some measure of intention to commit it, lacked the rebellious insolent defiance of a presumptuous sin.

While all sins are foolish, most of our foolishness would fall under the category of "sins of ignorance." They are sins of immaturity, of weakness, and God, in His merciful grace shows His willingness to forgive us, and to cleanse us of sin's defilement through the blood of Jesus Christ upon true repentance of the sin. But on the Day of Atonement God shows something else, that the cleansing does not end with the sinner's cleansing. On the Day of Atonement the cleansing is much more extensive, and I'll just show you a couple of highlights. Turn to Leviticus 16:1-6.

Leviticus 16:1-6 And the LORD spoke unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the LORD, and died. [That's in Leviticus 10.] And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron your brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the veil before the mercy set, which is upon the ark: that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat. Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering. He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired: these are holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and so put them on. And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.

And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for *himself*, and make an atonement for *himself*, and for his *house*.

Leviticus 16:11-20 And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself: [There is a bit of repetition here within the chapter.] And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail: And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not: And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times. [This blood represents Christ's blood even though it came from a bullock.] Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: And he shall make an atonement *for the holy place* because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel [who became unclean through sin, through doing things foolishly] and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness. And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goes in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel. And he shall go out unto the altar that is before the LORD, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about. And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel. And when he has made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat.

The same thing happens with the live goat. I won't read through that whole thing, except that the live goat is not killed. We all know that. The sins of the children of Israel are confessed over it, hands are laid on the head of the goat, and then it is led away by a fit man—somebody who has been prepared for doing that.

Half of all the appearances in the entire Bible of the word "atonement" appears in this chapter—Leviticus 16. The word "atonement" literally means "to cover." Yom Kippur—the Day of Covering. It means covering in the sense of: "hide from view," or "to completely pay for," as in the expression, "This amount will cover everything." It means that this covering meets the needs of all. The point in chapter 16 is the complete total expiation of every aspect of every sin committed by every Israelite during the year.

I don't know whether you noticed it, but there is a tremendous emphasis in this chapter on *cleansing*, and being touched by the blood. The fact that every element involved in the worship of God, beginning with the priest and his house (meaning the entire priesthood), the people, the mercy seat, the altar, the holy place, the tabernacle itself, are cleansed as it were in one fell swoop, in one ceremony.

Now why is God doing this? There are a number of reasons, but one of them is that God is teaching, *portraying* the leavening effect of sin. It touches everybody and everything that is connected to God: your sins, and mine; your foolishness, and mine. That sin's fruit. Foolishness's fruit doesn't lie dormant, but it impacts on others and things within the fellowship. In other words, our sins affect *the whole body of Christ*. Do we think it doesn't matter? Oh yes it does! This is why Paul said in I Corinthians 12, "When one suffers, we all suffer."

We are being shown, here in Leviticus, is that the foolishness of the worshippers during the year is being transferred to the tabernacle and its furniture, and that once a year *everything* is cleansed of its defilement. So God is portraying the effective power of the blood of Jesus Christ. All those things had to be sprinkled with the blood seven times (seven means perfection); once with the blood of the bullock, and once with the blood of the goat—so twice showing the effectiveness of the power of the blood of Jesus Christ.

I John 1:7-10 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

I John 2:1-2 My little children, these things write I unto you, that you sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

Jesus Christ is the propitiation. He is the payment. He is the atoning sacrifice. He is the satisfaction for the sins of the whole world, and it is the atoning sacrifice, the satisfaction for sin that completely covers the debt of our foolishness because the debt of sin *must* be paid.

Every sin is a gamble, and we all know that intellectually. There is another thing that we know intellectually that is attached to gambling, and that is that in gambling the house never loses. There ought to be a powerful lesson in that, but *we called* are often too willing to gamble with eternal life, foolishly thinking that somehow we're going to get away with it, or that it's not going to hurt anybody.

Just a couple of months ago, on a Thursday evening, Evelyn and I watched the television show *Crime Scene Investigation*. I think it's called *CSI*. At the beginning of it we were shown people riding in a bus on their way to Las Vegas. There was one fellow sitting there with a pair of dice in his hand, and had a little tray or something out on his lap in front of him. He was constantly rolling the dice with a smug smile on his face. After a while he said to the guy across the aisle from him, "I can't wait to get there. I have a system." He was implying he was going to beat the house." The fellow who was sitting across from him said, "Do you know what those people in Las Vegas say about you people? **Welcome!**"

In this world, brethren, Satan owns the house. We've all tried to beat him, and we can't, and he has his arms wide open, saying, "Welcome!" But this is the day to remind us that our debt is paid—the debt that we accrued by being foolish. We need to get ourselves cleansed by repentance, and by the blood of Jesus Christ, and then strive with all of our being to stay that way.