

**“The Hearts of the Simple”**  
Romans 16:17-18

Introduction: Heresy is always stealthy. It is like water that presses against a dyke. It probes for a weak spot through which it can enter, in a trickle at first but later like a flood. The church at Galatia was plagued with legalism, the church at Colossae with Gnosticism, the church at Thessalonica with false eschatological teachings. It is therefore not surprising to find that at Rome false teachers were on the prowl. Paul’s answer is to recognize them (“*mark them*”) and reject them (“*avoid them*”). (John Phillips)

1. Notice How They Betray Themselves Romans 16:17- *“Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.”*
2. Notice How They Behave Themselves Romans 16:18- *“For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”*
  - a. Notice their God Romans 16:18- *“For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly...”*
  - b. Notice their Goal Romans 16:18- *“...and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”*

Body: This is not the first time that Paul had to address false disciples of the cross (Philippians 3:17-19). Who was the victim in both instances? It was a people that had a simple heart. Noah Webster defined simple as, “weak in intellect; not wise or quick of thought; destitute of ordinary strength of mind”. Certainly, people that have simple hearts are apt to be led astray by false disciples of Jesus Christ. Let us look at those of a simple heart.

- I. The Corruptions of the Simple Heart Proverbs 7:6-7- *“For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding,”*
  - A. The Sin of Speech
    1. What is Rendered Proverbs 9:13- *“A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing.”*
      - a. Clamorous means speaking and repeating loud words; noisy; loud outcry.
      - b. She may have a pretty face, but she has an empty head. Her interests run to clothes and cosmetics, to fashion magazines and gossip columns, to trash and trivia. (John Phillips)
      - c. Proverbs 7:11- *“(She is loud and stubborn; her feet abide not in her house:”*
      - d. Proverbs 29:11- *“A fool uttereth all his mind: but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards.”*
    2. What is Received Romans 16:18- *“For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.”*
      - a. Proverbs 14:15- *“The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.”*

- b. There is a great deal of deceit in this world. Common sense ought to tell us not to believe everything we are told. (John Phillips)
    - c. Illustration: Woman with child and business man on a train. (John Phillips – Proverbs – Page 384.)
  - B. The Sin of Sensuality
    - 1. The House of Wisdom Proverbs 9:4- *“Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,” (Proverbs 9:1)*
    - 2. The House of Whoredoms Proverbs 9:16- *“Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him,” (Proverbs 9:14)*
      - a. She is like a spider waiting on her web. She sits at the door of her house to snare the unwary passerby. She is like a python, gliding forth to look for a victim around whom to throw her coils. (John Phillips)
      - b. She was using the power of persuasion. Proverbs 7:5-27
  - C. The Sin of Slothfulness Proverbs 22:3- *“A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.”*
    - 1. Proverbs 27:12- *“A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished.”*
    - 2. A wise man, whose eyes are in his head, who looks about him and before him, and is cautious and careful of his conduct and behaviour; he foresees the evil of sin he is liable to be drawn into by such and such company, snares, and temptations; and therefore he keeps from them, and abstains from all appearance of evil, or what would lead him to it; and he foresees the evil of punishment, or the judgments of God that are coming on for sin; and he betakes himself to the Lord, to those hiding places and chambers of retreat and protection he has provided for his people, till the indignation be overpast. (John Gill)
    - 3. Proverbs 14:18- *“The simple inherit folly: but the prudent are crowned with knowledge.”*
- II. The Continuation of the Simple Heart Proverbs 1:22- *“How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?”*
  - A. Wisdom pleads for the thoughtless throng to stop, look, and listen. (John Phillips)
  - B. These people cannot be bothered with wisdom. Give them money and they waste it. Employ them and they waste their opportunities. Offer them education and they will not study. In summer they idle away their time; in the winter they find themselves out of work, poorly clad, and inadequately housed. Nothing could be farther from their minds than wisdom. (John Phillips)
  - C. Simple foolish things, agreeably to their character, being weak simple men, men of weak capacities and shallow understandings. (John Gill)
- III. The Caution to the Simple Heart Proverbs 19:25- *“Smite a scorner, and the simple will beware: and reprove one that hath understanding, and he will understand knowledge.”*
  - A. Smiting a scorner will smarten everyone up. (John Phillips)
  - B. The principle here is that of making a public example of a particular person or a particular group of people in order to send a warning to others. (John Phillips)
  - C. 1 Timothy 5:20- *“Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.”*

1. Proverbs 27:5- *“Open rebuke is better than secret love.”*
  2. Deuteronomy 13:10-11- *“And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you.”*
  3. Deuteronomy 19:20- *“And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you.”*
  4. Titus 1:13- *“This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith;”*
  5. 1 Timothy 1:20- *“Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.”*
  6. 2 Timothy 2:16-18- *“But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.”*
  7. 2 Timothy 4:10- *“For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, Titus unto Dalmatia.”*
  8. 2 Timothy 4:14- *“Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works:”*
  9. 3 John 1:9-11- *“I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.”*
- D. Proverbs 21:11- *“When the scorner is punished, the simple is made wise: and when the wise is instructed, he receiveth knowledge.”*

IV. The Command for the Simple Heart Proverbs 8:5- *“O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.”*

- A. Adam and Eve did not listen to wisdom when the serpent spoke to them in the garden. Cain did not listen to wisdom then Abel’s offering was accepted. The people did not listen to the wisdom of Noah in warning them of the flood to come. Ishmael, Esau, Reuben, Achan, Samson, Eli, Saul, Absalon, Shimei, Joab, Solomon, Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Ahab, and thousands of others did not listen to wisdom when she spoke. (John Phillips)
- B. The airwaves are alive with movies and music, news and views, sermons and songs, truth and trivia, fact and fiction, perspectives and propaganda. However, we need a different receiver to bring wisdom to us and that is the Bible. (John Phillips)

V. The Cure for the Simple Heart

A. Through God’s Precepts

1. Psalm 19:7- *“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.”*

2. Psalm 119:130- *“The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.”*
- B. Through God’s Proverbs
1. Proverbs 1:1- *“The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel;”*
  2. Proverbs 1:4- *“To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.”*

Conclusion: Certainly, it is a danger to be of a simple heart. It can lead into sins of speech, sensuality, and slothfulness. Those of a simple heart can be lead astray quickly because they lack wisdom that is from above. The only answer to curing a simple heart is the Word of God. May we cure simplicity with the wisdom that cries out from the pages of God’s holy Word.