

Proverbs 8:5

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

O ye simple, understand wisdom: and, ye fools, be ye of an understanding heart.

Analysis

Wisdom calls the 'simple' to understand prudence and 'fools' to gain heart understanding. The Hebrew 'pethi' (simple/naive) are those easily led astray—not hardened rebels but the gullible and unformed. The word 'ormah' (prudence) means shrewdness or craftiness in a positive sense—spiritual street smarts. Reformed theology affirms human depravity but also God's gracious initiative in offering wisdom to those who lack it. This verse demonstrates God's patience with the immature, calling them to growth rather than condemning them in their naivety.

Historical Context

The simple (pethi) appears frequently in Proverbs as a warning category—those who haven't yet chosen wisdom or folly definitively. In Israel's wisdom tradition, youth were considered simple, requiring instruction to mature.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. In what areas of life are you still 'simple,' lacking the prudence that comes from experience and instruction?
2. How does God's gracious call to the simple encourage you in areas where you feel spiritually immature?
3. What steps can you take to move from naivety to biblically-grounded discernment?

Interlinear Text

הָבִי יָנוּ	פְּתָא! מַ	עֲרֹמָה הַ	וְכִסְיֵי יָם
be ye of an understanding	O ye simple	wisdom	and ye fools
H995	H6612	H6195	H3684
הָבִי יָנוּ	לֵב:		
be ye of an understanding	heart		
H995	H3820		

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 1:22 (Parallel theme): How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?

Acts 26:18 (Parallel theme): To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Psalms 19:7 (Parallel theme): The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

Proverbs 1:4 (Parallel theme): To give subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion.