

## STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

### THE CONTRAST OF WISDOM AND FOLLY, PROVERBS 9:1-18

#### A. An invitation from Wisdom (1-6)

1. She is prepared for guests (1-2), ***Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn her seven pillars. She has slaughtered her beasts; she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table.***
  - a. She has built her house which is possibly best understood as the house is large and spacious.
  - b. She has prepared a meal and expects to receive guests.
  - c. Illustration of allegory, Augustine, *In these words, surely, we recognize that the wisdom of God, the Father's coeternal Word, has built a house for himself, namely, a body in the virgin's womb. And to this body, as to the head, he has united the church as his members, has 'slain' his martyrs as 'victims,' set his 'table' with bread and wine in allusion to the priesthood according to Melchizedek, and called the weak and unwise.*
2. She has sent out invitations (3-6)
  - a. It is a personal request to join her (3-5), ***She has sent out her young women to call from the highest places in the town, "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!" To him who lacks sense she says, "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed.***
    - 1) Those in need of attention are invited to join her, Cyprian, *Let our hearts be thirsty and ready to receive.*
    - 2) C. H. Toy, *...in contrast to those who have understanding, the 'simple' are 'those who have no moral insight and power of self-direction, the negative, unformed minds, not yet given up to sin, but in danger of becoming its dupes.*
  - b. It is an offer of life (6), ***Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight.***
    - 1) Dionysius of Alexandria, *...God leads us by the hand, training us for our salvation.*
    - 2) Jerome, *We must not trust in our wisdom, but in the Lord alone.*

#### B. On correction (7-12)

1. Note by Sid Buzzell, *Between the two invitations a brief series of tersely stated proverbs contrasts the nature and consequences of those who respond to each invitation.*
2. Fools will not receive correction (7-8a), ***Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you;***
  - a. It is dangerous to correct a fool.
  - b. Fools hate those who correct them.
  - c. Chrysostom, *Rebukes are even sharper than fire and knives. They make people react.*
3. The wise gladly receive correction (8b-12)
  - a. The wise love those who correct them (8b), ***reprove a wise man, and he will love you.***
    - 1) Psalm 141:5, *Let a righteous man strike me—it is a kindness; let him rebuke me—it is oil for my head; let my head not refuse it. Yet my prayer is continually against their evil deeds.*
    - 2) Augustine, *It happens regularly and it happens often that a man is cast down for a short time while he is being reprovved, that he resists and fights back. But afterwards he reflects in solitude where there is no one but God and himself, and where he does not fear the displeasure of others by being corrected, but does fear the displeasure of God by refusing correction. Thereafter, he does not repeat the act which was justly censured but now loves the brother, whom he sees as the enemy of his sin, as much as he hates the sin itself.*
  - b. Correction profits the wise (9), ***Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning.***
    - 1) Proverbs 1:5, *Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance,*
    - 2) Ceasarius of Arles, *Let us always admonish each other in charity. As often as any one of us sins, let us willingly and patiently accept the reproof of a neighbor or a friend.*

- c. The wise understand that wisdom and life comes from the Lord (10-11), *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight. For by me your days will be multiplied, and years will be added to your life.*
    - 1) Proverbs 1:7, ‘the fear of the Lord’ is the basis for all the appeals for wisdom from chapters 1 - 9.
    - 2) Augustine, *God not only gives us sweet instruction, but also continually stimulates us by healthy fear.*
  - 4. How one responds to correction is a personal choice (12), *If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; if you scoff, you alone will bear it.*
    - a. Job 22:2, *Can a man be profitable to God? Surely he who is wise is profitable to himself.*
    - b. There are personal consequences for making unwise choices.
- C. An invitation from Folly (13-18)
- 1. She attempts to trick those who would be her guests (13-15)
    - a. She is loud and seductive but with no substance (13), *The woman Folly is loud; she is seductive and knows nothing.*
      - 1) Proverbs 7:11, *She is loud and wayward; her feet do not stay at home;*
      - 2) Proverbs 5:6, *she does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it.*
    - b. She makes her appeal from conspicuous places (14), *She sits at the door of her house; she takes a seat on the highest places of the town,*
      - 1) Proverbs 9:3, *She has sent out her young women to call from the highest places in the town,*
      - 2) Folly is not ashamed to use others to draw in the foolish.
    - c. She tries to turn people to her (15), *calling to those who pass by, who are going straight on their way,*
      - 1) Proverbs 9:6, *Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight.*
      - 2) Be purposeful and know what must be avoided.
  - 2. She encourages fools to accept a lie (16-17), *“You who are simple, turn in here!” And to those without sense she says, “Stolen water is sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.”*
    - a. *Stolen water* may refer to illicit sex, note Proverbs 7:18-19, *Come, let us take our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with love. For my husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey.*
    - b. Proverbs 20:17, *Bread gained by deceit is sweet, but afterward the mouth will be full of gravel.*
    - c. Proverbs 30:20, *This is the way of an adulteress: she eats, and wipes her mouth, and says, “I have done no wrong.”*
  - 3. It is an offer of death (18), *But they do not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol.*
    - a. David Hubbard, *The issues of choice that have dotted every page and virtually every paragraph are here made starkly clear. They are nothing less than life (v. 6) or death (v. 18).*
    - b. Dionysius of Alexandria, *The devil drives us on by violence, drawing us to destruction.*

CONCLUSION
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- A. Sid Buzzell, *Wisdom is portrayed as a responsible woman of character and wealth preparing a banquet, while folly is portrayed as a harlot inviting young men to a sensual meal of stolen water and food eaten in secret.*
- B. Athanasius, *If the Word is our pilot, we enter into rest. But if pleasure takes hold of us, we face the danger of storms and are shipwrecked.*
- C. Chrysostom, *How can we have victory over the enemy? By running to God for shelter.*