

Choose Lady Wisdom
(Proverbs 9:1-18)

03/15/20

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Wisdom and Folly are extending invitations to their homes for a feast. Be careful where you choose to go because there are great consequences. Wisdom will lead to life and folly will lead to death. Only those who fear the Lord will make the right choice.

Introduction

This has been a very stressful week for all of us. With the spreading of the coronavirus, we witnessed the rodeo shutting down, the NBA suspending the rest of the season, the NCAA basketball tournament being cancelled, all the school districts closing down, and the stock market tanking. There is great fear and anxiety before us. We wonder what is going to happen next. Many are scrambling to buy necessities like sanitizers, masks, rice, toilet tissues, and clean water.

We all want control, but through this outbreak, we realize that there are many things that are out of our control. The only person that is in total control is our sovereign God. During this uncertain time, we can turn to our solid rock, where we can find security. We need wisdom from above to do those things that are within our control. Those things that are out of our control, we need to trust the Lord.

We have been studying the Book of Proverbs, which is a book of wisdom. We will study Proverbs 9 this morning, which is a hinge chapter that summarizes the first 8 chapters and prepares the way for the second part of the book of Proverbs.

Let us look at the structure of this chapter. It is divided into three paragraphs. The first paragraph and the third paragraph mirror one another, each with an invitation. We have the opportunity to choose which invitation that we want to accept. It is an either/or decision. There is no third option. For every choice that we make, there are consequences that are tied to it. We see that explained in the middle paragraph. Our choice will determine what kind of life we will have. Therefore, let us choose wisely.

There are two invitations in this chapter. There is the Wisdom invitation and the Folly invitation. Let us look at Wisdom's invitation as recorded in verses 1-6. Let's read, "Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn out its seven pillars. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. She has sent out her maids, and she calls from the highest point of the city. Let all who are simple come in here!" she says to those who lack judgment. Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding."

A. Choose Which Invitation to Accept (9:1-6; 12-17)

1. Wisdom's Invitation (9:1-6)

The house that Wisdom has built is a pretty large and spacious place with seven pillars, which is an unusually grand house. Wisdom has also prepared a lavish feast with meat and wine. It was only on special occasion, where meat was served. The phrase, "Mixed her wine," means to add in spices to make the wine even better. Here we see a

very extraordinary banquet being prepared. Wisdom also sends out her maids to invite everyone to come to this feast. They go to the highest point of the city, where people far and near can hear the call. She is proactive in making sure everyone knows that this is an open invitation. As we look in verse 4, Wisdom is targeting a specific group of people to come, namely, the simple. Who are the simple? Let's read v.4 again, "Let all who are simple come in here! She says to those who lack judgment."

A simple person is one who lacks judgment. In other words, he is naïve or gullible. He tends to believe anything (14:15) and blindly stumbles through life without considering the consequences (22:3). He thinks he knows it all, but actually, he is not aware of how others are taking advantage of him. Therefore, he is susceptible to the trap of seduction because he lacks discernment (9:4). They are the most needed to receive wisdom. ILLUSTRATION: He is like a high school student who laughs at his parents' instruction and ignores it. The good news is that the simple can obtain wisdom if they pursue it (8:5; 9:16). They are invited to eat and drink. They are encouraged to acquire the wisdom and enjoy its benefit.

Wisdom is calling out to the simple to come to feast in her house. In verse 6, Wisdom gives specific instructions for life. She says, "Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of understanding." I like how this verse is translated in the Living Bible: "Leave behind your foolishness and begin to live; learn how to be wise." She is basically saying, "Turn away from your foolish practice and repent. Come to my banquet and I will teach you to be wise and give you true life."

The simple must first recognize that his path will get him nowhere. He must humble himself and reach out to get help. ILLUSTRATION: This reminds me of Levi, who was a tax collector. Jesus invited him to join him. Although Levi had all the resources everyone envies, he was missing something. When Jesus invited him to come, he did not hesitate to accept his invitation. He humbled himself, recognizing he was missing something in life.

[The 3rd paragraph records Folly's invitation, which has similarities with Wisdom's invitation. They both are targeting the simple and are calling from the highest point of the city. However, there are many differences. Let us read vv.13-17, "The woman Folly is loud; she is undisciplined and without knowledge. She sits at the door of her house, on a seat at the highest point of the city, calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way. Let all who are simple come in here! She says to those who lack judgment. Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!"]

2. Folly's Invitation (9:13-17)

The description for folly here is similar to the adulteress recorded in Prov. 7:11. Folly is loud, careless, and seductive. Lady Folly is sitting pursuing those who pass by like a prostitute. These are men that are passing by minding their own business. Folly is calling them. Instead of meat and wine, Lady Folly offers stolen water and food eaten in secret. Stolen water looks back to Proverbs 5:15-18, where sexual relations are described as drinking of water. Food eaten in secret is literally "bread of secrecy." It refers to

temptation to easy money as recorded in 1:11-14; 4:14-17; 6:12-15. Folly will entice us to sexual sin and to easy gain. Folly is making glamorous promises that cannot come true.

APPLICATION: There are two weak areas among us, sexual pleasures and greed. Both are very addictive; once we get a taste of it, we want to go back for more. Satan has used these two means to enslave many. Pornography has taken hold of so many people. Greed has destroyed so many people; broken relationships are a result. It traps us and we do not seem to have a way out. It is attractive on the outside and it gives much pleasure initially, but there are dreadful consequences afterward.

We have a choice to make. We can accept the invitation of Wisdom or the invitation of Folly. Whichever way we choose, there are great consequences. May we choose carefully. It seems to be a no brainer as to which way we should go. But in reality, there is a tug-of-war going within us because we are attracted to sin. That is our human nature. We are born with a bias toward folly. Deep inside, our hearts are corrupt. That is why obvious choices are difficult to make. Therefore, knowing the right thing to do is not enough. It is so important that we take a close look in the mirror and see who we are. Understand our short comings. We are a mess deep inside and we need help from God.

Lord willing, as we understand the consequences that go along with the choice of accepting Wisdom's invitation or Folly's invitation, it will persuade us to make the right choice. Let us look at verse 7-12 as we examine the third section of this passage, where we have to choose which consequence to accept. It describes the consequences of accepting Wisdom or Folly. Those who heed Wisdom learn from rebuke, add to their knowledge, and enjoy life. But those who heed Folly are not open to correction. As a result, they will suffer.

B. Choose Which Consequence to Accept (9:7-12, 18)

1. Choosing life by choosing to fear the Lord (9:7-12)

From vv.7-9, another two major characters are introduced here, namely, the mocker and the wise man. The mocker basically has accepted the invitation of Folly. And the wise man has accepted the invitation of Wisdom. Let me read vv.7-9 for you to get some description of these two characters, "Whoever corrects a mocker invites insult; whoever rebukes a wicked man incurs abuse. Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you. Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning."

A mocker is not only foolish and proud (21:24), but he really does not want anything to do with wisdom or instruction. He thinks he knows it all and does not want to be corrected. As a matter of fact, he will hate you for trying to correct him (9:7-8). He is closed-minded and not willing to listen. He deliberately brings strife (22:10). Therefore, people do not want to be around him (24:9). A mocker is probably a very insecure person. He tends to hide that insecurity by being arrogant and by mocking others. He just wants some attention but what he really needs is the Lord. He needs a complete heart transplant. He is an angry person and is resentful of others. Both the simple and the

mockers are deceiving themselves thinking that they know more than they really know. They are not aware of who they are.

In contrast to the mocker is the wise man. What is he like? He has an open, positive attitude toward God. At the center of a wise man is his heart for God. He fears the Lord and embraces God's wisdom. He is teachable and willing to learn and to be corrected (15:31). A wise person has a proper view of who he is as well as who God is. He knows that he is inadequate and welcomes wisdom.

We have introduced three characters in this chapter, a simple man, a mocker and a wise man. Who are you most like? It is crucial that we understand who we are and who God is. We are not as smart as we think. We might be naïve and stubborn. We might not want to be corrected. We might be a pain in the neck to others. Basically, we are sinners. But God loves us in spite of our messiness. He went to the cross to pay the penalty of sin on our behalf. Three days later, God raised Him from the dead showing that God has accepted his payment for us. We desperately need to be saved. When we put our faith in Him, then we become a child of God. He has not only offered us eternal life, but also abundant life. God wants to transform us, but many times, we do not allow Him to even though we claim to put our trust in Him. May we realize that we are still weak and we need God to give us wisdom.

God has given us a manual for life in the Bible to show us how we can have a meaningful relationship with God and our neighbors. God, who is the source of wisdom, can guide our lives so that we can enjoy it fully. But before we can receive this wisdom from above, we need to fear the Lord. [Let us look at (Prov. 9:10) "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."]

In order to receive wisdom, we are to fear God. What does it mean to fear the Lord? To fear the Lord means to be in awe of God or to revere God. It is recognizing God's awesomeness. As a result, we submit and obey Him. This requires us coming up close to Him and being aware of His presence. He is active in our life. Do we recognize how He has blessed us? Do we see how He has provided and protected us? Do we experience how He has answered our prayers? Nothing happens by chance. Too often we only know about God, but really do not know God or value God for who He is. We do not notice what He is doing in our lives. I challenge you each day to write down a God Hunt. May we search out how God is working in our lives. May we see how big God is and how small we really are. The more we understand and value God, the more we will fear the Lord. Then in times of uncertainty, we can find comfort and assurance in Him because He has authority over all things. We do not need to fear because He watches over us and loves us.

We are free to make choices, but there are consequences that go along with the choice that we make. Each decision will lead us into a different path. When we choose to accept the invitation from Lady Wisdom, we choose life. In order to experience life, we need to fear God. In v.11, God promises us that our life will be extended. READ v.11, "For through me your days will be many, and years will be added to your life." What

that means is that we will live less stressful life and will enjoy life more. God wants us to have not only eternal life, but also abundant life. To enjoy abundant life, one needs to walk in wisdom. We see this clearly in v.12, "If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer." The wise person embraces wisdom. As a result, he gains reward. He is willing to learn from his own mistakes as well as the mistakes of others. He is willing to be corrected. However, we see there are different consequences to the decisions that mockers make, who follow folly. Mockers will suffer because they are stubborn and not willing to be corrected. He is not willing to accept that he needs help.

We can choose to accept the invitation of Wisdom or we can choose to accept the invitation of Folly. There are definite different consequences. We choose life by choosing to fear God, but we choose death by choosing folly. Let us read v. 18 and see where folly will lead us. READ v.18, "But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of the grave."

2. Choosing Death by choosing folly (9:18)

Folly will deceive us to embrace the desires and pleasures in our life. She seduces her victims by giving them half-truths. Yes, it will give pleasure, but it is only temporary. Eventually, it will lead to destruction. We will be enslaved by our passions and pleasures.

Lady Folly wants to lure us into her house. This reminds me of what was written in Proverbs 7, which gives the same parallel theme. In (Proverbs 7:7), we see that Lady Folly sees the simple and lures him in. "I saw among the simple, I noticed among the young men, a youth who lacked judgment. He was going down the street near her corner, walking along in the direction of her house at twilight, as the day was fading, as the dark of night set in. Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent. She is loud and defiant, her feet never stay at home." Let us continue reading in 7:21-22, "With persuasive words she led him astray; she seduced him with her smooth talk. All at once he followed her like an ox going to the slaughter, like a deer stepping into a noose." One last verse I would like to read is Prov. 7:25-27, "Do not let your heart turn to her ways or stray into her paths. Many are the victims she has brought down; her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is a highway to the grave, leading down to the chambers of death." Lady Folly will lead us to a path of death. She knows our desires and will tempt us by luring us to her through deception and manipulation. Indeed, it is pleasurable and it feels good. If we are not be careful, it will enslave us. We will be eternally separated from God. What appears to look attractive on the outside can lead us to death.

In conclusion: May we see how messy we are. We are weak and not that smart. We have all kinds of issues. The bottom line is that we need the Lord to save us and to guide us with wisdom. Wisdom and Folly are extending invitations to their homes for a feast. Be careful where you choose to go because there are great consequences. Wisdom will lead to life and Folly will lead to death. Only those who fear the Lord will make the right choice.