

Bible Recall: POINTS IN PROVERBS

PROVERBS 9 – Two Invitations

Chapter 9 places two contrasting invitations before the reader. Proverbs 9:1-6 calls the passerby to turn in and feast on the banquet of understanding. Proverbs 9:13-18 portrays folly seeking to seduce bystanders to turn in.

WISDOM'S INVITATION (Prov. 9:1-6)

1. *Wisdom builds her house with strength—seven pillars* (9:1). This is similar to the Lord's call, "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock:" (Matt. 7:24). The sayings of Jesus are the pillars of a strong and healthy life! In Proverbs, the woman of wisdom is contrasted with the foolish woman. "The wise woman builds her house, But the foolish pulls it down with her hands" (Prov. 14:1).
2. *Wisdom prepares her table with the best food to fill those who are hungry for knowledge* (9:2). Similarly, Jesus called out to others saying, "Blessed [are] those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6).
3. *Wisdom sends out her maidens* (9:3). They cry out from the highest places of the city to enlighten others. The invitation is for everyone! This should remind us of the Lord's teaching of the wedding feast that a king prepared for his son in Matthew 22:1ff. He sent out his message but sadly, it was ignored and made light of by some (Matt. 22:3-5). Some even became violent against the heralds of the feast (Matt. 22:6)!
4. *Wisdom calls the naive* (9:4-6). This call is not to take advantage of the simple, but to educate them and communicate to them the way of understanding. Her bread and wine satisfy. In the New Testament, we can reflect on how Jesus is the bread from heaven (Jn. 6:32-35). He provides nourishment for the soul. We can think of how in Cana of Galilee, He took water and turned it to sweet unfermented wine at a wedding (Jn. 2:1-12). Jesus took what was good and *made it better*. The world takes what is good and makes it evil. Their intoxicating drink mocks man, and dulls his senses, and turn gentlemen into brawlers (Prov. 20:1).

Similarly, God's design of marriage makes a man and a woman better (Heb. 13:4). Yet the world takes it and defines it as *a ball and chain* relationship. The world establishes their own views of marriage and relishes in forbidden pleasures and uncommitted love: "Stolen water is sweet, And bread [eaten] in secret is pleasant" (Prov. 9:14).

TWO KINDS OF INVITEES (9:7-9)

The scoffer, when corrected, only makes a bad situation worse. *He who corrects a scoffer gets shame for himself, he harms himself.* The scoffer hates the corrector (9:8). He counts him as his personal enemy. Remember Ahab's view of Elijah?

"So Ahab said to Elijah, 'Have you found me, O my enemy?' And he answered, 'I have found [you], because you have sold yourself to do evil..." (1 Kin. 21:20).

Question: "How do I respond when I am corrected?" Is my pathway self-justification? Is it in a direction that attacks the messenger and shifts the focus to a perceived flaw? Is it in hatred? The wise respond in humility and sober thinking?

Jesus commanded His disciples to not throw the pearls of the gospel toward the dogs and hogs or unreasonable men (Matt. 7:6). The reason, they will trample the pearls under their feet and they will turn against the bearer of these pearls, tearing him to pieces. Because of their *attitude*, they prove themselves unworthy of heaven's riches. This is seen in the parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22:8 and in the lives of the apostles. "Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, 'It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles'" (Acts 13:46). "Attitude," not "intellect," is what makes men worthy/unworthy of heaven's message.

Unlike the scoffer, the wise man *loves* the one who corrects his misunderstanding (Prov. 9:8, 9). He loves; he becomes wiser; he increases in learning.

PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY (Prov. 9:10-12)

The knowledge of God results in gaining a good understanding and length of life. The place for learning can be well prepared, well researched with a message that is true but it requires an individual's will to take advantage of it. Gospel preaching will not benefit anyone where it falls on deaf ears. Proverbs 9:12:

"If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, And if you scoff, you will bear it alone."

FOLLY'S INVITATION (Prov. 9:13-18)

1. Where wisdom calls out to the simple ones to come in and gain understanding (9:4-6), folly cries out to those who are *going straight on their way* to detour (9:16). Folly doesn't want to improve, but rather it seeks to exploit and destroy. Rather than providing "my bread" (9:5) folly takes delight in *stolen water* and *bread eaten in secret* (9:17). Such a course of life is

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observed by the multitudes. Adam Clarke observed, “illicit pleasures are sweeter than those which are legal.”

2. The contrast is real!
 - a. The woman of folly is clamorous, simple, and knows nothing (cf. Prov. 7:11a). The wise woman imparts understanding.
 - b. The woman of folly seeks to be noticed by sitting on the highest places of the city. Even her feet do not stay home (7:11b). The woman of folly seeks to distract those who “go straight on their way.” Impudently she hunts and catches the passersby with kisses (7:13).
 - c. The woman of wisdom offers legal pleasures of her bread and wine where the woman of folly delights in stolen water—*come let us take our love until morning...for my husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey* (Prov. 7:19).
 - d. The woman of wisdom cries out to impart knowledge in the fear of God that adds life and length of days. However, the woman of folly has an enticing message built up with flattery that is, at last, a place for the dead to gather (7:21-23, 26, 27; 9:18).

Conclusion:

Life is filled with decisions and differing invitations. The invitations we accept or refuse will have an impact on our eternal dwelling place. What will your answer be when folly or wisdom calls out for your name?

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, [that] I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He [is] your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them. Deuteronomy 30:19, 20.

—Steven J. Wallace