

Folly's Deception

COMPETING CALLS • PART 3 • PROVERBS 9:13-18

Baxter T. Exum (#1664)
Four Lakes Church of Christ
Madison, Wisconsin
October 30, 2022



We'd like to welcome you to the Four Lakes Church of Christ this morning! If you are visiting with us today, we are especially glad that you are here, and we hope that you will take a moment to fill out a visitor card online. The QR code is on the bulletin (on the wall, right inside the front door), and the web address for that is very simple: www.fourlakescoc.org/visitor. And while we are on this slide up here, let's remember our efforts to collect CANNED PINEAPPLE for Shults-Lewis Child and Family Services. We have five more weeks to collect pineapple, and old cell phones, and used inkjet and toner cartridges, as well as funds for other groceries down there. Thank you so much for helping with this!

Before we get to our study of the Word today, the elders would like to introduce Dee Williams to the congregation. Dee has been worshipping with us for almost a year now, but we finally had a chance to talk with Dee last Lord's Day, to get to know each other a little better, and to introduce her to the church here. Dee grew up in West Tennessee and has moved a number of times through the years as she has continued her education along the way – I think I remember references to Knoxville, and the Chicago area, and Fort Worth, and Nashville. Most recently, she worshiped with the Dublin Street congregation down in Urbana, Illinois, as she earned her PhD in Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois. She is now here in Madison to teach at the University of Wisconsin, and we are so glad that she has been with us! We have a church library that could use some help! But as we talked last week, I also heard that she took on the responsibility of making some PowerPoints for the sermons and the songs down in Illinois, and also that she helped run that during worship (if I understood her correctly). So, Dee may have a future in the A/V room if she has any interest in that. We are working on getting her information updated in the church directory, she does have a cubbyhole back here now, and we hope you will take a moment to get to know Dee over the next few weeks if you haven't done so already. We are glad you are here! We'd like to welcome you to the congregation. We hope to be able to encourage you in your spiritual journey, and we hope that you will be able to encourage us as well. Aaron, one of our elders, will make a point of thanking God for sending Dee our way when he leads our closing prayer today.

We are here this morning, to share the good news that Jesus the Son of God came to this earth to save us. He died in our place on the cross, he was buried, and he was raised up on the third day. We obey this good news by turning to God in obedient faith, confessing our faith in Jesus as the Christ, and by allowing ourselves to be buried with Christ in baptism, an immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins. We do have several examples this week, starting with an update from Tazvitya Kamba who preaches somewhere in Zimbabwe. He posted

earlier this week, and he says, “We have had a wonderful day at [the] four congregations we labor with. Please pray for our efforts and saints. Enjoy viewing the pictures.” We have this first picture, and then we have another. So, at least two have been baptized in Zimbabwe last Sunday morning. Great news! And we share this to remind us what it means to obey the gospel, and if you would like to do what these people have done, we invite you to get in touch, and we would love to study with you. Our contact information is on the front of the bulletin each week. Or you can simply either call or text me at 608-224-0274.

As I was looking at the information from brother Kamba, there were several other pictures that really caught my attention as well, starting with this one. And what I noticed here is that their table for the Lord’s Supper seems to be made out of bricks! They are meeting outdoors, and the elements for the Lord’s Supper seem to be on top of something that almost looks like an altar. Very interesting! In this picture, I hope you will also notice how the people in the lower right-hand corner seem to be sitting on a tarp, with this tarp being held down by a brick of some kind, but we will get back to that in just a moment. And then we have a few pics from at least two different assemblies, with the first being held under some kind of shelter or pavilion, and their pulpit here also seems to be made of bricks. I thought that was interesting as well, to have a brick pulpit! And then we have some pictures of an assembly under the shade of some trees. They are completely outdoors here, and I hope you notice what they are sitting on here. If you look closely, you might notice that they are sitting on tarps and blankets. We can hardly imagine bringing our own tarp to sit on every Lord’s Day, and yet that seems to be what is happening here. And the other picture here shows another assembly with some benches, and I use the term “bench” very lightly. I’ve zoomed in on it here, to show what they are actually sitting on. I am surprised that this even works! We have branches just barely held together somehow. To me, it almost looks dangerous. I think I might prefer the tarp. But I share this as a reminder: We are extremely blessed to be able to worship in a facility that is safe, and warm, and comfortable. We have a place that is pretty much 72° no matter what. It might be 90° outside or 10° degrees outside, but it is almost always 72° in here. And we have actual seats, with backs on them! I am giving this as a reminder, that roughly 7 hours ago, our brothers and sisters in Zimbabwe sat on dirt, and tarps, and logs as they worshiped. Let us be thankful!

This morning, I’d like for us to wrap up our study of Proverbs 9, which is a small part of an ongoing very sporadic series of lessons from the Proverbs! In the book of Proverbs, King Solomon is basically warning his sons, “Don’t do stupid stuff!” But instead, as they grow older, he wants them to make wise decisions. And this is what we see from King Solomon, continuing in Proverbs 9, as he presents the choice between wisdom and foolishness as two women offering competing invitations to a dinner. Two weeks ago, we looked at Lady Wisdom’s invitation to dinner, “Wisdom’s Call,” as we’ve described it up here. The venue itself is stable and secure, the dinner is lavish, the invitation is calm and rational – aimed at those who are simple (or open-minded), and the meal itself is quite appealing with some amazing benefits. Last week, we looked at Solomon’s advice concerning how to distinguish between those who are wise and those who are foolish, focusing in on how we handle correction. Those who are wise listen to correction and learn from it, while those who are foolish will respond with violence, both verbal and sometimes physical. And Solomon reminds his sons (in the last verse of this passage) that ***“If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, and if you scoff, you alone will bear it.”*** In other words, as you make this decision between competing invitations, if you choose wisdom, you will reap the benefit, but if you choose foolishness, you will bear the consequences.

This week, we return to the other invitation. We’ve already seen wisdom’s call (in verses 1-6), and now (in verses 13-18) we come to FOLLY’S DECEPTION. This is the CALL OF FOOLISHNESS. As we look at this paragraph, I’d like for us to notice the contrast, then, between Lady Wisdom’s invitation to dinner and this invitation from the

foolish woman. And to me, it's interesting how Solomon personifies both wisdom and foolishness as women. In my mind, King Solomon, as a dad, pulls his sons aside for a lesson on women. And his sons, perhaps teenagers at the time, lean in a bit, "Oooo, we need to hear about women." Their dad, of course, has had some experience here. And he uses this experience to teach some valuable lessons.

This morning, then, let's look at FOLLY'S DECEPTION, the CALL OF FOOLISHNESS – this is Proverbs 9:13-18,

- ¹³ *The woman of folly is boisterous,
She is naive and knows nothing.*
¹⁴ *She sits at the doorway of her house,
On a seat by the high places of the city,*
¹⁵ *Calling to those who pass by,
Who are making their paths straight:*
¹⁶ *"Whoever is naive, let him turn in here,"
And to him who lacks understanding she says,*
¹⁷ *"Stolen water is sweet;
And bread eaten in secret is pleasant."*
¹⁸ *But he does not know that the dead are there,
That her guests are in the depths of Sheol.*

In this paragraph, then, we have the call of foolishness. And it is similar to Wisdom's call (in verses 1-7) – both involve invitations, both are trying to be persuasive in their own way, but there are obviously some significant differences. There's no excuse to confuse the two! And King Solomon wants his sons to notice these differences: This is how you distinguish between Wisdom's Call and the Deception of Foolishness. So, as we make the same choices in life that Solomon's sons had to make, let's spend a few moments this morning looking at Folly's Deception. What do we need to know? What are we to look out for? What are some of the warning signs that we are being invited to make a stupid decision?

- I. **And I hope we notice, first of all, that in her invitation, Folly herself is both BOISTEROUS AND IGNORANT – which is not a good combination!**

In verse 13, *"The woman of folly is boisterous; she is naive and knows nothing."* The word *"boisterous"* has been translated elsewhere as: rowdy, unruly, brazen, growling, howling, disturbed, making an uproar, noisy, roaring. Almost sounds like a Katy Perry song! First impressions are important; so, we have Lady Wisdom sending out invitations, and then we have this woman – growling, roaring, even boisterous. She's presenting herself as the alternative to Wisdom, "No! Don't go over there! Come over here!" She's loud. She raises her voice. Not because we are hard of hearing, but to get our attention, to drown out the competition. Like an annoying ad on social media that suddenly blares when you are quietly scrolling in the middle of the night, Folly is annoying. She has no real message, so she makes up with terrible content with volume. She shouts to cover up the fact that she has nothing of value to offer. Like clickbait that sucks you in but leaves you unfulfilled, she roars, but there is nothing to it. She is obnoxious, in love with the sound of her own voice.

At the same time, though, Solomon warns his sons that this woman is completely ignorant, knowing nothing. Her ignorance is evident to everybody but her. I don't know why, but I think of "Florida Man." Florida Man is always doing something stupid, isn't he? "Florida Man on Motorized Scooter Leads Police on Chase Through Wal-Mart," "Florida Man Missing After Attempting to Ride Jet Ski to Bahamas in Spite of Incoming Hurricane,"

and so on. And yet, whatever Florida Man does, it obviously must have seemed wise to him at the time, or else he wouldn't have done it! Florida Man, though, doesn't know any better. Like Folly, he is ignorant; "undisciplined," as some have described this. Before we accept an invitation into someone's life, it might be wise to consider the way this person is living. Do they show signs of living a disciplined life? How are their finances? Is this person deep in debt, living beyond their means? Are they responsible? Do they seem to take care of themselves? Folly does not. She is **"naïve and knows nothing."** She is undisciplined. She doesn't know, and she doesn't know that she doesn't know. And if you point it out, she will attack you for it (as we learned in last week's passage).

And we might be tempted to think that she just doesn't know as much as the other woman. Maybe she's just not quite as educated. And yet, as we also learned last week (in verse 10), **"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."** In other words, if we dig down a bit, we start to find that this woman has no fear of God. She has no respect of God. This is the real issue here. And it expresses itself through **"boisterous"** behavior. She is like the person described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, **"If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal."** She's up there banging on a pot trying to get people's attention, but she has no knowledge, no fear of God whatsoever. She's just noisy and annoying.

II. This leads us to verses 14-16 as Solomon now describes this woman as **LAZY AND DEMANDING.**

In verse 14, notice that **"She sits at the doorway of her house, on a seat by the high places of the city."** This is in contrast to Lady Wisdom. Up in verses 1-2, **"Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn out her seven pillars; she has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table."** Do we notice the action words there? And do we see a contrast between these two women? Wisdom builds, hews, prepares, mixes, and sets. Folly? She sits! Wisdom gets it done. Folly sits there and yells at people, **"She sits at the doorway of her house, on a seat by the high places of the city."** Wisdom sends out servants with invitations. Folly sits there and yells.

I do find it interesting that she seems to be in a position of authority. This seat she is sitting on is positioned **"by the high places of the city,"** and not only that, but the word **"seat"** (in verse 14) is almost always translated in scripture as **"throne."** It's possible, then, that this woman holds some kind of position of authority. She is powerful. And just thinking about Solomon here, weren't some of the women in his life rather powerful? Very early in his reign (in 1 Kings 3:1), the text says, **"Then Solomon formed a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her to the city of David...."** King Solomon married a princess, and this was the beginning of the end. A little bit later, we come to 1 Kings 11, where the text says,

¹ Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, ² from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods." Solomon held fast to these in love. ³ He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. ⁴ For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.

Many of these women would have been quite powerful. Many of them probably sat on "thrones" (they were princesses). Solomon, then, is speaking from experience here. Just because a woman sits on a throne doesn't mean you need to turn aside to listen to her. Solomon is warning his sons about this.

And notice (in verse 15), this woman calls out ***“to those who pass by, who are making their paths straight.”*** Do we notice here that Folly isn’t necessarily calling out to those who are evil; no, Folly is calling out to those who are on the “straight and narrow,” we might say. Folly is out to get those who are on the right path, and she is trying to take them off that path. This certainly describes King Solomon in those early days. Folly is actively enticing those who truly have better things to do. And she is ***“calling.”*** This goes back to a word that is translated elsewhere as ***“proclaim”*** – to ***“cry,”*** to ***“scream,”*** to ***“summon.”*** In my mind, I think back to growing up and visiting the Chicago Mercantile Exchange. I don’t know how they do it now, but back when I was a kid, we would go downtown Chicago on field trips, and we would sometimes stop in to watch those men make trades on the floor of the exchange – a sea of men in various colored coats, and they all seemed to be screaming at each other. They were buying and selling, wheeling and dealing. That’s the picture I have of Folly in this picture. Or we might picture her as a prostitute, sitting at the door of her house, luring people in with loud and boisterous shouting. We might make another comparison here to the media all around us. So many sources are shouting at us from all directions, demanding that we accept the unacceptable, and they persist until we give in.

Then, in verse 16, we notice how she focuses in on the naïve and on those who lack understanding. This is almost identical to the target audience of Lady Wisdom. Both women are looking for those who are ***“open-minded,”*** although, obviously, for different reasons. Lady Wisdom is looking for those who can be taught, while Folly is looking for those who can be tricked. So, we have Lady Wisdom sending out invitations, and then we have this woman, calling out as she sits by the door of her house.

III. As we continue, we come to her actual message (in verse 17), where she encourages her victims to **DO WRONG**.

There may be a better way of summarizing this, but she invites these people in to stolen food, and tells them how good it will be. There’s so much in this one verse, but I want us to start with the meal itself. It’s hardly a meal, is it? Remember: Lady Wisdom is offering wine and meat (her food had to be butchered). Folly, though, offers bread and water. Bread and water is perhaps the most basic of all food. This is the minimum. These are prison rations. Years ago, I got in trouble and was offered bread and water as a consequence. We had driven from Germany to Strasburg, France, for worship, and we were driving back to Germany late at night in the winter, in perhaps one of the worst cars ever made, a Renault minivan. I had no speed limit on the Autobahn, but I was driving the world’s worst car. It was terrible. We had border crossings. It had been a long day, and we were coming back through a tiny German village with these narrow streets with signs in a language I did not understand, and I was following that line on the GPS as if my life depended on it. As we approached an intersection, we either made or received a call to my sister-in-law (I don’t even remember), but when my wife explained where we were, her sister said something like, “Turn left! Turn left! I know a shortcut!” Well, the GPS wasn’t telling us to go that way, I had seconds to react, and I said, “We are not turning. We are following the GPS.” Well, that didn’t go over too well. And when we finally got back to her place later that night, we had bread and water waiting for us on the kitchen table. We were in trouble. At first, I thought it was a joke. Nope. No joke. We had disobeyed, and these were our rations for the night – enough to keep us alive, but no more. It’s funny to me now, but this is what I think of when I see this reference to bread and water. This is the bare minimum.

But Folly is calling out, and her message is: It’s bread and water, but you are going to enjoy it, because ***“Stolen water is sweet; and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.”*** In other words, you will enjoy this meal, because it is WRONG! You will enjoy this meal, because it is ***“stolen.”*** We might compare it to seeing a “Wet Paint” sign. I would never have reached out to touch that park bench if it had not had that sign on it! There is pleasure in

doing what we have been told not to do; otherwise, we wouldn't do it! There is pleasure in getting away with something. So, we have this one meal with meat and wine, and Folly comes along with only bread and water, and her pitch is: Mine tastes better, because it is stolen! Mine tastes better, because it is wrong!

We might think of the forbidden fruit in Genesis 3. We might think of Achan taking those banned items out of the rubble of Jericho. We might think of King David and Bathsheba. We have everything we could possibly want right here (with God's blessing), but there is this thing or this person over here who is off-limits, and that's what we think we need to have. We exchange the luxury of meat and wine for the bare necessities of bread and water. In the same way, Folly gives us not what we need, but what we think we want.

We might compare it to fast food. What we really need is a good healthy sit-down meal, but what we get is a #3 with fries and a Coke. Why? Because it's quick and easy. So, also, with sin. Sin offers immediate satisfaction, but it is so temporary.

IV. And this leads us to the DESTRUCTIVE RESULTS, as we come to the twist (in verse 18).

The young man is offered sweet water and delicious bread, ***"But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol."*** So, he's invited to a banquet, but she fails to mention that the guests at that meal are DEAD! We might try to picture being invited to a banquet, but when we get there, we look around and everybody's dead! We turn to the guy next to us, we're about to ask him to pass the stolen bread and water, but the guy looks like something out of a horror movie. Absolutely disgusting! So, this isn't really a banquet, it's a trap. It may look like this woman is sitting in the doorway of her home, but she's really sitting at the entrance to the morgue; she's really sitting at the entrance to a mausoleum. Have all of us been inside a mausoleum? Some are better than others, but no thank you! I've been in some that just smell like death for some reason! Stuffy, humid, flies all over the place. Again, no thank you! And we can hardly imagine showing up for a banquet in a place like that. No way!

But this is the picture in verse 18. Folly invites us in, and when we accept that invitation, the trap door opens, and we wake up dead. We've been deceived by the deceitfulness of sin. We think of what James writes in James 1:14-15, ***"But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death."*** Sin fails to deliver what was promised, and we are let down in the end. We know what this is like in other areas, don't we? Have we ever experienced something that ended up being less than what was promised? Maybe a book recommended by a friend? What was this person thinking? Maybe a movie? Maybe a Curderburger? So many times, what is promised may not be what is actually delivered. And this goes back to the beginning. Remember Satan in the Garden? "You surely will not die!" And yet, they died, didn't they? Satan sets the bait, we fall for it, and then we suffer the consequences. That's what happens here in Proverbs 9. King Solomon can see it coming, and so he warns his sons: Do not fall for this! Folly shows us the worm; Solomon shows us the hook. He is begging his sons: Do not fall for this! As Paul warns, ***"The wages of sin is death"*** (Romans 6:23). Solomon's warning is the same warning Jesus gives in Matthew 7:13-14, ***"Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it."***

Conclusion:

As we come to the end of this series of lessons from Proverbs 9, Solomon reminds us that we have a decision to make. We cannot double book. We cannot accept both invitations to two dinners at the same time, but we must choose. And King Solomon's advice to his sons (and ultimately to us today) is summarized in verse 6, where he says, ***"Forsake your folly and live, and proceed in the way of understanding."*** Life is full of choices, and this is the most important. We are surrounded by temptations and distractions. Folly is calling out to us, but she's calling from the doorway to death and destruction. However, when we are tempted this week, let's have the wisdom to look beyond the thrill of secretly eating stolen bread, and let's look for Wisdom's invitation. Let's look for how God would have us choose. We choose with every decision we make. With every temptation, we choose between the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. We choose between following Cain or following Abel. We choose between following Abraham, Isaac and Jacob or following Lot, Ishmael, and Esau. We choose between following the example of David or following the example of Saul. We choose between entering through the narrow gate or entering through the wide gate. We choose between Christ and this world. How we respond to every temptation is a choice.

By the way, just about every verse from here on out in Proverbs will illustrate this choice between wisdom and foolishness. I'd like to keep on looking at Proverbs here and there over the long term, but in the meantime, we have this reminder from Solomon, to ***"forsake our folly and live, and proceed in the way of understanding."*** Let's make good choices this week. Let's accept the Lord's invitation.

As we close our thoughts on this passage, let's go to God in prayer:

Our Father in Heaven,

You are the God of all wisdom, and we come to you this morning asking for wisdom. We pray for discernment as we face temptations each day. We pray for the courage to take King Solomon's advice, to see temptation for what it really is, and to choose to follow you. Surround us with good friends who will lift us up.

We come to you through Jesus our Savior. AMEN.

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com