

Folly's Invitation

Proverbs 9:13-18

Charlie Brackett

Wisdom extends a special invitation as described in Proverbs 9:1-6. She invites her guests to proceed in the way of understanding, the way of wisdom. Then, beginning in verse 13, Solomon presents for us another invitation, one that stands in contrast to the invitation extended by wisdom. The foolish woman, or the "woman of folly" as the New American Standard Version calls her, is very different from the lady called wisdom. The woman of folly is boisterous and naive. She really knows nothing, yet she sits at the doorway and in the high places of the city boldly calling out to those who pass by. "Whoever is naive, let him turn in here." She purports to have knowledge for him who lacks understanding.

By comparing verses 4 and 16 it is easy to see that the invitation of the woman of folly is exactly the same as wisdom's invitation. More than that, it is proclaimed in the same way and to the same audience. Verse 15 suggests she is calling to the very ones who have heard wisdom's call and responded, the ones "who are making their paths straight." "If you lack understanding, I will give you guidance," she says. How ludicrous! She herself is naive and knows nothing! Talk about the blind leading the blind! Listen to what she promises. "Stolen water is sweet and bread eaten in secret is pleasant." Of course, neither is true, but even if it were, big deal! Who wants bread and water when verses 2 and 5 tell us that wisdom offers a table sumptuously spread with food and wine?

Whose house are you turning into, dear reader? The house of wisdom or the door of folly? Wisdom says, "Forsake your folly and live, And proceed in the way of understanding." The fact is, she knows whereof she speaks. She is able to make good on her invitation and on her promise. Folly, on the other hand, offers little and lies about that. She would have you believe that her offer is the same as wisdom's, but her house is a disaster area. Verse 18 says "the dead are there."