

Proverbs Ch9v1-18 - Christ Invites us to His Banquet

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[0 : 00] That's on page 642 of the Red Church Bible.! Proverbs chapter 9.

! It's how God wired the universe.

It's how everything works best. And the first part of the book of Proverbs, that's chapters 1 to 9, is like an introduction to the rest of the book.

If you actually look across at chapter 10 there, this is where the short, punchy Proverbs begin, that the book is best known for, I suppose.

So in chapters 1 to 9, the author, King Solomon, is appealing to his son to embrace the wisdom that's contained in the rest of the book.

[1 : 15] And one of his main methods of doing this is by personifying wisdom and folly as women.

And chapter 9 is the climax of his appeal, right before the Proverbs statements begin. So as we read this text, here's something to watch out for.

Notice the contrast between these two women, Lady Wisdom and Lady Folly. They are each presented as hosts, inviting us to a banquet.

Notice what happens to those who embrace each of their invitations. Before we read, let's pray and ask for God's help. Lord, as we come to read your words to us now, we don't want to go through the motions.

We want to really hear you speak to us now. We ask you to challenge us, convict us, move us to embrace your wisdom above the folly of this world.

[2 : 35] We plead that you'd help us to see Christ today. For his sake we ask. Amen. Chris is going to actually read the text aloud for us.

Thank you. So it's Proverbs chapter 9. Wisdom has built her house.

She has set up its seven pillars. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine. She has also set her table. She has sent out her servants and she calls from the highest point of the city.

Let all who are simple come to my house. To those who have no sense, she says, Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed.

Leave your simple ways and you will live. Walk in the way of insight. Whoever corrects a mocker invites insults. Whoever rebukes the wicked incurs abuse.

[3 : 45] Do not rebuke mockers or they will hate you. Rebuke the wise and they will love you.

Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still.

Teach the righteous and they will add to their learning. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. And knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

For through wisdom your days will be many. And years will be added to your life. If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you.

If you are a mocker, you alone will suffer. Folly is an unruly woman. She is simple and knows nothing.

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.

[4 : 44] Let all who are simple come to my house. To those who have no sense, she says, stolen water is sweet. Food eaten in secret is delicious.

But little do they know that the dead are there. That her guests are deep in the realm of the dead. I wonder, have you ever been invited to a banquet feast?

Two weeks ago, Yelena and I were invited to a wedding in this beautiful hotel beneath the Kerry Mountains. After the ceremony, we were treated to finger food and drinks in this sun-drenched

garden.

At 5.30, we were called into this grand banquet hall and found our seat at this beautifully laid table. There was wine for anyone who wanted it.

You could order whatever soft drink you wanted. It would be delivered right to your table. Now, we were already feeling spoiled at this point. But then we saw that the menu had four courses.

[5 : 55] Each one with multiple choices. And even better, one of the main courses was steak. With peppercorn sauce and all the trimmings, my eyes nearly popped out of my head.

This most generous host had paid for all 120 of his guests to eat steak. Well, after four delicious courses, including steak, I mean, how could you turn down that?

I was well and truly stuffed. Now, a few years ago, we were invited to another wedding feast. It was a lovely ceremony.

And afterwards, we sat down in the banquet hall. We waited and waited. And eventually, dribs and drabs of food began to arrive over the course of about an hour.

It was really strange. Probably the strangest meal I've ever had at a wedding. The only standout memory I have is this bowl of roasted courgettes, which was plunked down on our table.

[7 : 12] There were 10 of us on the table. We all just looked at each other. And we slowly began passing around this bowl of courgettes, ladling out a little spoonful put in the middle of our plate, making sure that everyone would have enough around the table.

And we were so hungry that we couldn't even wait for something else to come out to accompany it. We all just sat there laughing, eating our measly portion of roasted courgettes.

Needless to say, as soon as the speech was finished, Yelena and I were down the road to the nearest chipper. No joke, we were. Back in time for the dancing. The banquet, which promised so much, had left us hungry.

Now, on both those weddings, the two invitations seemed exactly the same. But they were really two invitations to two very different banquets.

And now in this text today, we have two invitations which seem at first to be the same. But in reality, they're invitations to two polar opposite banquets.

[8 : 26] The question raised in this text for you and for me is this. Which invitation will you accept? There's no third option.

It's either or. But our choice is more complex than we initially thought. And here's why. Because for the passing observer, the invitations appear to be identical.

Look at verse 4. This is wisdom's invitation. She says, Let all who are simple come to my house. Look at verse 16 now.

This is Lady Folly's invitation. Let all who are simple come to my house. Exactly the same thing, right? Identical.

Now, King Solomon, I think, is showing us something. Foolishness often sounds like wisdom. It can use all the same words.

[9 : 22] It seems to promise us all the same things. Sometimes foolishness seems like skill for living well in God's world. In our world, we hear things like this.

Just be yourself. Don't let anyone stop you. Follow your heart wherever it leads you. You are the master of your fate.

You're the captain of your soul. You can be whoever you want to be. You deserve the best. Spend your money on getting the things you've always desired.

These are the things we hear. This is the supposed wisdom of our time. Inviting us to follow. How can we discern which invitation is really wisdom?

Well, here's how Solomon brings us behind the scenes to see the culture in each house. And when we do that, we begin to see some stark differences.

[10 : 29] Here's the first difference. There are different preparations for the banquets. Now, both claim to have prepared a banquet feast, but their preparations couldn't be any more different.

Have a look in verses 1 to 6. Wisdom is busy. She is building a house, setting up its seven pillars. That symbolizes spaciousness, wealth, stability.

She is preparing her meat. She's mixing her wine. She is self-sufficient. She borrows from no one. Then we find her setting her table and sending out her servants.

We've got six action words here describing her diligent preparation. Contrast that to Lady Folly. In verse 14, she sits.

Shanae. She sits. Well, actually, there is one more. Because in verse 13, it says, Folly is an unruly or literally a loud woman. She's simple and knows nothing.

[11:36] So Lady Folly sits and talks loudly about herself at the door of her house. She is too self-obsessed to care for her guests.

She prefers to sit around talking about herself. In court terms, she's full of hot air. While Folly sits and jabbars on about itself, wisdom quietly, diligently prepares.

That's the difference between wisdom and Folly. It's humble service versus selfish idleness. But we also see these hosts present different food.

Lady Wisdom's house has no junk food. Right? Because of her preparation, she's able to dish up tender meat and tasty wine. This is homegrown food which satisfies hunger and tastes good.

A substantial meal which symbolizes richness and fullness of life. In contrast, Lady Folly can only offer scraps that she has stolen from others.

[12:45] Look at verse 17. She says, You see, fake wisdom is always stealing from true wisdom.

Just be yourself. Don't let anyone stop you. That's one of the things we hear today, right? There's a truth somewhere in that. God created us to be individually unique.

He wants us to be our truest selves, whole and complete in him. But fake wisdom takes God out of it and says, You can decide who you want to be.

The stone, water, and bread may temporarily satisfy, but not for long. It can compare to the feast that wisdom offers us. But these hosts also have different demands.

Look at verse 5. Wisdom says, Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. Leave your simple ways and you will live.

[13:56] Walk in the way of insight. Wisdom isn't a cushy people pleaser. Wisdom demands that we leave our simple ways behind us to join in her wholesome feast.

Folly demands that we leave our straight ways behind us to join in her stolen feast.

Can you see that difference? Folly doesn't call us onto anything greater. She just drags us down into the worst version of herself.

She drags us down into selfish greed for more. Into navel gazing and obsession with image. Into secret lust and sexual sin.

Into bending the rules to get ahead. She promises a feast if we join her. There's a sense of truth in her statement in verse 17 because she says, Stolen water is sweet.

[15:03] At first. Food eaten in secret is delicious. Initially. Initially. But then it always lets us down.

Then the guilt sets in. And the sweet taste turns sickly in our mouths. Folly drags us down into the gutter.

Wisdom calls us upward. She is realistic about our simple-minded situation. Our wisdom deficit.

Wisdom calls us off the path of folly and onto the path of wisdom.

Proverbs 4.18 says this. The path of the righteous is like the morning sun shining ever brighter till the full light of day. Wisdom calls us upward to life.

And this leads us to the last difference. Different destinies. Lady folly promises us a sweet taste in our mouths if we would walk in her door.

[16:16] But look at verse 18. But little do they know that the dead are in there. That her guests are deep in the realm of the dead.

Piled up in the back of her house are the corpses of her guests. Some party that was. They're dead now. This host is venomous.

She seduces the simple to come in her door but they don't know her malicious intent. It's not a laughing matter this banquet's business.

It's not a trivial thing which path you follow wisdom or folly. Your destiny is death and destruction if you follow the path of fools.

That's what the text says. But look at the difference of wisdom in verse 6. She says leave your simple ways and you will live.

[17:26] Verse 11 through wisdom your days will be many and years will be added to your life. Feast on the richness of my table wisdom says and you will thrive.

You'll know true life. This is the destiny of all those who accept my invitation and come into my house. if we step back and look at this wise host the preparations the food presented the demands made the destiny offered we cannot help but see Jesus as the wise and wealthy friend who has thought of everything we needed and prepared it in advance for us.

Christ is the true host inviting us into his house to a far superior feast. He lacks nothing that we need.

Colossians 2 says this for in Christ all the fullness of God lives in bodily form and in Christ you have been brought to fullness.

Jesus offers us no water down scraps. He offers himself his rich satisfying fullness.

[18:58] Jesus says in John 10 10 the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I have come that you may have life and have it to the full.

He says in John 6 I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry. whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

How could we turn away an invitation from this richest, most generous, most loving, most honoring host?

would we turn instead to the invitation of this world and all its glamorous promises which are hollow in the end?

Two invitations. Which one will we accept? Maybe you're wondering how do I know if I've accepted wisdom's invitation?

[20:07] It's good that you should ask that. We need to. And the middle part of this text today actually tells us how. Solomon splits fools into different categories in the book of Proverbs.

So in this chapter we have the simple or the uncommitted. And the hosts are calling out to the simple-minded and appealing to them to join their banquets.

But we also have another type of fool in this chapter called the mocker. And let's see what we can learn about them now. Firstly, mockers refuse to repent.

And they hate rebuke. Have a look with me from verse 7. Whoever corrects a mocker invites insults.

whoever rebukes the wicked incurs abuse. Don't rebuke mockers or they will hate you. Rebuke the wise and they will love you.

[21:11] Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still. Teach the righteous and they will add to their learning. See, wisdom says to us, you are foolish and on the road to the destruction, leave your simple ways behind and come into my house.

Mockers are insulted by that. They're offended by wisdom, telling them that they have an innate wisdom deficit. Mockers hit back, but they're fine.

Yeah, might make a few mistakes here and there, but how dare you say I am on the road to destruction? I am a good person. See in verse 8, Mockers hate those who try to instruct them in how they need to change.

If you point out some aspect of their foolishness to them, they get angry. They justify their own behavior or they fling back an angry dart of your faults and failings, never willing to admit their own. that's what a mocker is. Doesn't it sound familiar in our lives? See, the tragic thing about all this is that Solomon questions the point in even trying to rebuke them or instruct them.

[22:42] Solomon seems to say in verse 8, their heart is so hardened to wisdom, they seem beyond the point of repentance. repentance. This is tragic. God forbid that any one of us would be found among the mockers, cold, hardened, unwilling to repent at wisdom's rebuke.

Ultimately, unwilling to repent at Christ's rebuke. How dare Jesus tell me I have a sin problem? How dare he say I am destined for hell?

How dare he ask me to change my lifestyle or words or spending habits or attitudes? I will never accept his banquet invitation. It only insults me.

I'd rather take the other invitation. That lady over there, she affirms me in my actions. She says I'm doing just fine. shudder at the thought of being in that number.

Be warned. Verse 12. If you are a mocker, you alone will suffer.

[24:05] Here is the banquet you have chosen. death. It ends in eternal death. If that is you today, come on your knees before God and ask him to change your heart.

Because if Jesus can change a heart of stone like Saul's on the road of Damascus, he can change mine and he can change yours. It's never too late to cry out to Jesus.

And you know what? There is another response in this text. The wise. The wise willingly repent and they grow wiser still.

Look at verse 8 and 9 again. Don't rebuke mockers that they will hate you. Rebuke the wise and they will love you. Instruct the wise. They'll be wiser still.

Teach the righteous and they will add to their learning. That's the first thing we see. The wise love those who rebuke and instruct them.

[25 : 17] Here's how one way, how you know if you've accepted wisdom's invitation in Christ. Do you love those who rebuke you and instruct you? Do you welcome feedback on how you could be a better version of yourself?

If you're married, do you ever ask your spouse, how can I love you better? What things do you see in my life that I need to change? If you're with a close friend, do you ever ask, friend, in what ways have I hurt you in our relationship?

How can I be a better friend in person? If you're meeting with your elders in church or those who watch over your spiritual health, are you willing to accept feedback from them as to how you can grow in your faith?

The wise love those who teach them, because they're teaching them how to get wiser still. It's all gain. Yes, it hurts to hear about our sin.

That stings. It feels bad at the time, doesn't it? But if that other person truly loves you, it's okay to be broken in front of them.

[26 : 31] We could just pretend that we're faultless and blameless and the finished package, but we're only kidding ourselves. Embrace the opportunity to grow in wisdom.

Are we actually doing that? Yes. Second thing we learn is that the wise are always growing in wisdom.

Once you leave your simple ways and turn into wisdom's banquet, you begin feasting at her table. Wisdom begins to rub off on you more and more.

Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still. Teach the righteous and they will add to their learning. Do you see that positive cause and effect cycle? The more you listen to wisdom, the wiser you get. Can we say today that we're growing in wisdom? Looking back over our lives, even a year, five years, ten years, can we see those signs of growth in wisdom?

[27 : 36] That's another sign that we've accepted wisdom's invitation. But here's the last one I think we're given. It's that the wise fear and know the Lord.

Have a look at verse 10. Scholars tell us this is the most important verse actually in the whole book of Proverbs. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

And knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. You see, fearing God and knowing him are the beginning of wisdom.

Wisdom is ultimately about knowing God. God. How do we know God? We know him ultimately through Christ.

Jesus actually said, he said, if you knew me, you would know my Father. So do you love Christ? Do you fear him, that sense of reverence and honor, that desire to worship him?

[28 : 42] the wise are those who hear his call to repent and freely confess to him their foolishness. They desire to live his way from now on. That doesn't mean that wise people are perfect people.

They're still learning wisdom, right? And Christ, their most generous and patient host, has made provision on the cross for all their failures past, present, and future.

the wise come to him daily for forgiveness, which he freely provides. So do you honor Jesus as your Lord and King?

That is the beginning of wisdom. And from there, we just continue to grow in wisdom as we walk with Jesus in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

So this is what the wise are like. They love those who rebuke and instruct them. They're always growing in wisdom. They fear the Lord.

[29 : 46] Does that description match your life and mine? I want to finish with a story, and this is one that Jesus told.

If you could turn please to Luke, chapter 14, and verse 15. This is on page 1048 in the Red Church Bible.

Luke, chapter 14, verse 15. And Johnny was referring to this already this morning. Jesus says that all our wedding banquets are shadows of the true wedding banquet to come in heaven, the greatest feast imaginable, when his bride, the church, God's people, those who trusted in Christ, will be united to Jesus in marriage forever.

That's the true marriage. And the call goes out to the world for all to come to Christ, to be part of this marriage forever.

And this is what Jesus is referring to as he tells this parable in Luke, chapter 14, verse 15. When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, blessed is the one who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.

[31 : 22] Jesus replied with a story. A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet, he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, come, for everything is now ready.

But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, I have just bought a field. I must go and see it. Please excuse me. Another said, I've just bought five yoke of oxen and I'm on my way to try them out.

Please excuse me. still another said, oh, I just got married. I can't come. The servant came back and reported this to his master.

Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.

sir, the servant said, what you ordered has been done, but there is still room. Then the master told his servants, go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in so that my house will be full.

[32 : 43] I tell you, not one of those who were invited will get a taste of my banquet. The people invited to the feasts turned down the invitation, right?

They just thought they didn't need it. Likewise, how easy is it for us to make excuses for Jesus? I have a good life.

I've got health. I've got a family, money, a career. I don't need Jesus forgiveness, his wisdom, his life.

In the end, in the story, who was it that came in? It was the poor, the bankrupt, the sick, people who know they are desperate.

They gleefully accepted the invitation. They couldn't believe they were asked. They left everything and ran and joined the feast.

[34 : 01] Christ is the true host, inviting us into his house to a lavish wedding feast forever. He is a wealthy and wise friend who has thought of everything we need in advance and prepared it for us.

He lacks nothing that we need and it comes at no cost to us. We don't have to pay our way in to the feast or settle the bill afterwards.

No. We are bankrupt fools with nothing in our hands to offer him. except to simply reach out and receive his mercy.

To bring glory to him as the most generous, most honoring host who has loved us and gave himself up for us so that we could be his bride, his people united in love to him forever.

which invitation will you accept? Will you choose the banquet of this world with all its hollow promises that end in death?

[35 : 24] Or will you be seated at the wedding supper of the Lamb in heaven in white garments made clean by Jesus? Let's pray.

pray. We're just going to pause to consider our response to Jesus' invitation.

salvation. If you haven't accepted him, what would hold you back this day? Your pride?

Your own intuitions of your own goodness? If you have accepted Jesus, are you daily feasting at his banquet of life, of wisdom?

Speak to him now. Amen. Amen. Lord, forgive us for when we turn to the scraps that this world offers us, as if that's the real food.

[37 : 10] Forgive us for when we turn down your rich, satisfying feast of wisdom. for emptiness.

Help us to daily feast at your table, Jesus. Filling our hearts with your words, which satisfy us and bring us life.

Let us know the overflowing life that you made us to live in Christ Jesus forever. We ask all these things for your glory and for our good.

Amen.