

Reference: PROVERBS 9
Church: GRACE Date: 12/28/03

The Call of Wisdom and the Call of Folly

Purpose: To review the last year and look forward to the next, looking at the two voices that call to us and asking which we have listened to in 2003 and which we will obey in 2004.

1. Introduction

The last Sunday of 2003 - a good time to take stock.
Even the world realizes this – New Year resolutions
How much more should we examine ourselves as believers
Have we grown in wisdom this last year?
Greater fear of the Lord, More holy? More Christ-like?
Knowing greater victory over sin?
Richer prayer life, greater insight into the Word?
Greater sense of God's presence in our lives?
Or are we more like the world than we were
Have we given in to temptation to please ourselves first?
Have we adopted more and more of the world's ideas
Made a truce with our sin
Come to more of an accommodation with Satan
Are we more at home in the world than we were?
This morning we are going to use Proverbs 9 to help us
In this world, the voices of Wisdom and Folly call to us
We will look at the characteristics and contents of their cries
Ask which one we listened to more often in 2003
Which we will listen to in 2004

2. Wisdom and Folly revealed

2.1. *What are they like?*

Wisdom offers truth, righteousness, understanding. (8:4-11)
Wisdom is ordered and industrious –
Built 7 pillared house for banquet – strong, large, perfect, Spirit
Slaughtered animals, mixed wine, set table
These are pictures of spiritual things (later)

Folly has no knowledge, no wisdom, no shame (9:13)
She is undisciplined, loud, tumultuous, attractive to the flesh.
Overcomes the mind by noise, tumult and sensuousness.
She also has a house in which she conducts her feasts
These are pictures of carnal things

2.2. *Where do they call?*

Proverbs 1:20 Wisdom shouts in the street, She lifts her voice in the square; **21** At the head of the noisy *streets* she cries out; At the entrance of the gates in the city she utters her sayings:

Proverbs 8:1 Does not wisdom call, And understanding lift up her voice? **2** On top of the heights beside the way, Where the paths meet, she takes her stand; **3** Beside the gates, at the opening to the city, At the entrance of the doors, she cries out:

Proverbs 9:3 She has sent out her maidens, she calls From the tops of the heights of the city:

Proverbs 9:13 The woman of folly..... sits at the doorway of her house, On a seat by the high places of the city, **15** Calling to those who pass by.....:

Wisdom and Folly are both at the side of the road,
On the city heights, at its gates, calling to those who pass by.
Prominent places – there are none who do not hear
None who do not go there
That means they call to you and to me
They have called to us all through 2003, they will call in 2004

2.3. *How do they call?*

As we have seen, Wisdom calls repeatedly herself (1:20, 8:1)
She sends out her maids – servants to declare her words (9:3-4)
She stands to proclaim her message – (8:2)
Effort, endeavor, earnestness
“Come to me and live! Why will you die?”

Folly also calls but it seems with less effort
She sits on a seat by her house – (9:14)
It's an easier task to lure sinners to folly
Than to call them to wisdom and righteousness
“Come and gratify your cravings in my secret places!”

2.4. To whom do they call?

Both call to the “simple” and “to him who lacks understanding”
Or judgment (9:4), (9:16)

The “simple” a vacuum, able to be filled with wisdom or folly

Wisdom calls to everyone – sons of men (8:4)

To those who are wise – to gain more wisdom (9:9)

To those who are fools – to turn from their ways (9:6)

Folly calls to those who “make their paths straight” (9:15)

Raised to know the right way and setting out hopefully upon it

She doesn’t target those already in her snare

Young people – she calls to you!

Children – she calls to you!

Older folks, she calls to you!

All of us can lack understanding and judgment

All of us can be weak and vulnerable to the wiles of Folly

2.5. What do they call us to do?

One part of their appeal seems identical:

“Let him who is simple turn in here”

Enter my house and take part in my feast!

They offer understanding

But two very different kinds of understanding:

Wisdom offers a great feast of meat and wine

Spiritual nourishment, leading to wisdom and life

How do we obtain wisdom?

Through fearing the Lord, reading His Word, prayer, attending
on the means of grace

This is the meal on offer

Served in a house filled with the Spirit (church?)

True understanding! True, eternal satisfaction

Also, Wisdom requires her hearers to forsake folly and live;

To walk in the way of understanding (9:6) – to get wisdom!

Put off the old man, put on the new

Not to sow to the flesh but to sow to the Spirit

How much did you answer this call in 2003?

Folly praises stolen water and bread eaten in secret as sweeter

Likely a reference to carnal lusts and adulterous relationships

Things obtained and done contrary to God’s law;

Done in secret, hidden places

A short term fix for the flesh

Served in the house of Folly – the world, Vanity Fair

It is outward, full of pride and show

1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the
lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father,
but is from the world.

Intent on pleasing self above all else

My pleasure, **my** fun, **my** having a good time, **my** amusement

These are in first place in a life lived according to Folly’s call

You know how powerful this call can be

You feel it urging your flesh every day

Unlike Wisdom, Folly requires nothing of her hearers

Except to indulge their flesh

How much did you answer this call in 2003?

Note the deliberate parody of Wisdom by Folly

They almost sound the same to begin with, don’t they?

But they do not end the same and neither do their hearers!

2.6. What is the result of answering the calls?

Those who answer Wisdom receive life (9:6)

Spiritual treasure and satisfaction through Christ

Eternal joys and pleasures this world knows nothing of

Those who answer Folly’s call receive death (9:18)

Her house is the grave and the dead are there

Hastened death here, eternal death to follow – Unbeliever!

Galatians 6:7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a
man sows, this he will also reap. **8** For the one who sows to his own
flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the
Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

2.7. Whose call will you answer in 2004?

Every week you will hear Folly crying to you:

Television, radio, movies, lyrics of songs, billboards, friends, colleagues, family, even brothers and sisters in Christ:

“Just do it”; “You’re worth it”

“Go on - indulge yourself” – no one needs to know at church!

“It’ll be fun, we’ll have a good time, have some laughs”

“You owe it to yourself”

Have you followed into her house, gratified the flesh in 2003?

Will you listen to that call in 2004?

Every week you hear Wisdom

In the Bible, in sermons, Sunday School

In the Lord’s Supper, prayer, fellowship with the godly

Every week, spiritual understanding, judgment is on offer

Have you forsaken Folly, walked in way of understanding?

Sought for holiness? Keenly felt and confessed your sins?

Hungered and thirsted for righteousness?

Diligently sought and found Wisdom? (8:17)

Followed into her house, nourished your soul in 2003?

Will you listen to her call even more in 2004?

A word of caution as you consider your answers:

Wisdom and Folly can seem much the same to the unwary

From this passage we see:

- They appear in the same place
- They call to the same people
- They use the same words in their appeal

How is this possible?

Take broad evangelical churches as an example

Never mention sin to be given up, holiness to be struggled for

Or Hell to be suffered

But only **self** esteem, **self** worth, **self** affirmation, **+ve** thinking,

Who entertain their congregations with music, drama and glitz

Stirring up feelings and emotions by outward things, not Spirit

What are they calling to? The flesh!

What are they appealing to? The flesh!

“You can satisfy the cravings of the flesh in Christ’s name!”

Saturday services that don’t hinder **your** pleasures on Sunday

Superbowl in place of a service – fellowship **and** see big game!

“Yes, you can do it! Come into my house and please yourself!”

How seductive! How appealing!

What FOLLY!! Even in the church!

And so Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light

So think carefully about what you are being told

Get wisdom and knowledge and discernment and understanding

Evaluate what is being offered

Will it promote wisdom? Spiritual nourishment?

Or is it junk food that at best spoils my appetite for wisdom?

Remember - the good is the enemy of the best

Good things done to excess will rob you of what is best

Luke 10:41 But the Lord answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; **42** but *only* one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

What of your friends – do they promote wisdom or folly?

Proverbs 13:20 He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will suffer harm.

Your television programs, songs on the radio etc etc

Will you answer the call of Wisdom or Folly in 2004?

Ephesians 5:15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, **16** making the most of your time, because the days are evil. **17** So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

3. Conclusions

Who have you listened to in 2003?

Who will you listen to in 2004?

Unbeliever – I can answer for you – Folly, Folly, always Folly!

Will you carry on like that and so come to the grave?

People of God, if ever a society surrendered to Folly, this is it!

Folly is everywhere – around us and within

The world needs to see what Christians **really** look like

They don't need to see mirror images of themselves!
They don't need to be told that Christians are not that different
That they don't have to give anything up to come to Christ
Just bolt Him on to your present life to make **you** more happy!
They need to see holiness, godliness, wisdom, self denial
They need to feel condemned by our conduct
Empty in contrast with our fullness!
Parched and barren compared with us
Dead and dying compared with our life!

Here is a good New Year's resolution for us all:

Proverbs 23:23 Buy truth, and do not sell *it*, *Get* wisdom and instruction and understanding.

Answer the call of Wisdom in 2004!