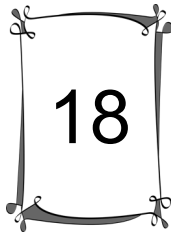


The background of the slide is a scenic landscape. A paved road curves through a valley, bordered by a fence. To the left, a railway track with overhead power lines runs parallel to the road. The trees are in autumn, with yellow and orange leaves. In the distance, a large mountain peak is visible under a cloudy sky.

Sermons of Robert Murray M'Cheyne

**18. Wisdom's House and
Folly's House**

Sermons
of
Robert Murray
M'Cheyne



Wisdom's House and
Folly's House

Wisdom's House

“Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: she hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table. She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled. Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding”
Proverbs 9:1-6.

Wisdom here spoken of is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. This is plain:

1. *From His eternity*, described in Prov. 8:22, 30, and 31. This is true of none but the Lord Jesus. He only was with God in the beginning, before all creatures were.

2. *From His having the Holy Spirit*: “Behold I will pour out My Spirit unto you,” (Prov. 1:23). But it is Christ alone who has received the Holy Spirit, and pours it out according to his will: “I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplications,” (Zech. 12:10).

3. From the name given in Luke 11:49: “Therefore also said the Wisdom of God.” So that in this elegant Old Testament parable we have a sweet and inviting representation of the love and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. The preparation he has made. — Verses 1, 2.

1. *A house*: “Wisdom hath builded Her house.” This house may mean two things.

(1). *The invisible Church which Christ is now building*: “Even He shall build the temple of the Lord; and He shall bear the glory,” (Zech. 6:13). “Upon this rock I will build my

Church,” (Matt. 16:18). “Whose house are we,” (Heb. 3:6). Just as it was Solomon, the prince of peace, who built the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem, so it is Christ, the great prince of peace, the king of glory, who builds up this house. His hands have laid the foundation — His hands shall also finish it. He chooses the stones, brings them out of the quarry of nature, lays them on the foundation: “I will lay thy foundations.” This is the house sinners are invited to enter. Come, and be part of “the spiritual house.” Come, and be one of the living stones. Come, before He brings out the headstone with shoutings.

(2). *The many-mansioned house*: “In My Father’s house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you,” (John 14:2). “For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,” (2 Cor. 5:1). “Here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come,” (Heb. 13:14). This is the house into which Christ will bring all His redeemed at last. Here we live in crazy dwellings, that will soon be a heap of smouldering ruins. But Wisdom hath builded Her house, and invites poor helpless sinners to take refuge there. Come to Me, and I will provide you a home for eternity — “a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

2. *The pillars*: “She hath hewn out her seven pillars.” Pillars in the Bible seem always to describe eminent believers — not merely stones, but stones which are used to support other stones of the temple: “For the pillars of the earth are the Lord’s, and He hath set the world upon them,” (1 Sam. 2:8). “I bear up the pillars of it,” (Ps. 75:3). “I have made thee an iron pillar,” (Jer. 1:18). “James, Cephas, and John, who

seemed to be pillars,” (Gal. 2:9). And this is what all who overcome will yet be made: “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God,” (Rev. 3:12). Of these pillars there are seven — a perfect number — enough to bear up the temple of God — enough to give it perfect beauty and proportion. God will never want a sufficient number of eminent believers in the world to maintain His cause, and bear His name. He hath hewed them — they are all His own workmanship. They are the work of His own hands. By His Word, mercies, afflictions, He hath hewed them. He gives them all their beauty, grace, and stability. This is the house you are invited to enter, where patriarchs and apostles dwell, to share in the peace and joy of John and holy Paul.

3. *The feast*: “She hath killed her beasts.” — Verse 2. The peace, and joy, and holiness, to be had in Christ, are here described under the image of a feast. So Isa. 25:6: “In this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast.” And in Isa. 55:1: “Ho, every one that thirsteth.” And in Matt. 22:4: “Behold, I have prepared My dinner: My oxen and My fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.” So here: “*She hath killed her beasts.*” This clearly points to the finished atonement of Christ. Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. With dying breath He said, “It is finished.” He is the Lamb as it had been slain from the foundation of the world. It is a finished atonement that you are invited to share in. The great redemption is complete. Christ has died. Christ has not now to die. All His sufferings are past; and if any of you are willing to take Him as your atonement, you are welcome. “*She hath mingled her wine.*” This clearly points to the gift of the Holy Spirit. “Be not filled with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.”

The Holy Spirit is the new wine of the kingdom, “that goeth down sweetly, causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak.” This also is free to sinners. “*She hath furnished, her table*” These things are not only in the house, but spread upon the table. All things are now ready. All this is free and ready for sinners now. It is spread out. There is no need of delay.

II. *The messengers.*

1. *She hath sent forth her maidens*, or young damsels. Prophets, apostles, ministers, missionaries, are here called the maidens of Wisdom. No doubt there is a beautiful suitableness in the word with the rest of the parable. The Saviour is set forth as a queen, so that His ministers are well represented as maidens. But there are also other reasons:

(1). *On account of their weakness.* The ministers of Christ are not compared to wily statesmen, but to simple maidens. “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world, to confound the wise. And God hath chosen the weak things of the world, to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are.” God has seldom chosen to convert many by men of gigantic mind and attainments, lest we should glory in man. God often blesses weaker brethren, that He may get all the glory.

(2). *On account of the purity of their lives.* Those whom Wisdom sends are in Her own image. Christ first sanctifies, and then sends. Ministers should be like Him whom they preach. Hear how Paul speaks: “Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblamably, we behaved ourselves among you that believe,” (1 Thess. 2:10). And this

he could say without pride or boasting. Hear how Samuel speaks: “Witness against me before the Lord and before his anointed, whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you,” (1 Sam. 12:3). Hear what Paul says to Timothy: “A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach,” (1 Tim. 3:2). “Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without.” Ah! pray, brethren, that your ministers may be kept humble and holy. We have more temptations than you. Satan aims most at standard-bearers.

2. *She crieth upon the highest places of the city.* This is the way Christ did when He was on earth — in the days of His flesh. How often He stood by the Lake of Galilee, and cried to the multitudes that thronged the shore: “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!” Once He stood in the midst of the temple, and in the great day of the feast He cried: “If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink.” And his last cry over this fallen world was: “Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” He crieth still. We are but the mouth-piece of Christ. He crieth by us: “God doth beseech you by us.” We are but a voice — it is Jesus that speaks. He cries in your mercies — He cries in your distresses — He cries through His ministers. He is still carrying on His grand prophetic office, and you are called to hear His voice: “He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me.”

III. *The persons invited.*

Those who are simple, and want understanding. So in Prov.

1:22: “How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity?” Simple ones are those who are ignorant of their danger. “A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished,” (Prov. 22:3). Those among you who do not know the weight of your sins — that do not know the plague of your own heart — that do not know that you are over the depths of hell — smiling and happy when you are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. Simple ones are those who are easily deceived by the devil — “who are taken captive by him at his will.” Ah! how many of you are there here who are opposed to the truth — who hate serious preaching! Why? You are taken captive. How many of you are taken up with a creature, that shuts out all the glories of eternity!

Without heart: “Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart,” (Hos. 7:11). How many of you have no heart for Christ! You see no beauty in Him — “no form nor comeliness that you should desire Him.” No heart for prayer. You do not love it — you turn away from it with loathing. No heart for holiness — for the pleasures of God, and of heaven. You have a feeling of nausea at the very thought of them.

Such Jesus invites — welcomes — presses to close with Him. True, Jesus invites His own: “I love them that love Me” — “Come, my people, enter into thy chambers” — “O My dove, that art in the clefts of the rock.” True, Jesus invites those who have a sense of sin: “Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” — “Ho, every one that thirsteth — “I will give to him that is athirst.” Yet it is as true that Jesus here invites simple ones — those that have no heart for divine things. Ah, brethren! many of you are like Gallio, “who cared for none of these things.” You have no heart for preaching or praying — no heart for Christ

and the eternal world. All your heart is taken up about this world — about your lusts and pleasures. Ah, silly doves! Jesus calls for you, and does not wish you to perish. You may perish — you may sink into your grave — but it will be with the voice of Jesus ringing in your ear: “How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge?”

IV. *The invitation.*

1. *Forsake the foolish, and live.* If ever you are to be saved, you must forsake the foolish. Solomon tells you plainly, “A companion of fools shall be destroyed,” (Prov. 13:20). Hear what David said: “Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for God hath heard the voice of my weeping,” (Psa. 6:8). Even though they should be those of your own household, yet God’s command is clear: “Forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house,” (Psa. 45:10). “He that loveth father or mother more than Me, is not worthy of Me.” Ah! how many poor souls have been carried away captive, and led down to hell, all through foolish companions! Forsake the foolish, and live. You say you cannot. Why? Are they more precious than salvation? If you will be the friend of the world, you must be the enemy of God.

2. *Come, eat of My bread.* This is explained in John 6:53: “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.” You must personally close with Christ, and live upon Him — as one who eats and drinks, when hungry, really enjoys the feast. It is not the man who hears of a feast, or sees it, but he that sits down and eats and drinks — he alone enjoys it. So those only who close with Christ — who take Him as their righteousness, and feed upon Him as their strength and daily life — are saved through Him.

Improvement.

1. Amazing love! that calls you to a feast, and not to hell.
2. Those of you that do not care, are the very persons called.
3. If you do not obey His call, you will soon be in the very depths of hell.

Folly's House

“A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing. For she sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, to call passengers who go right on their ways, Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: and as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell”
Proverbs 9:13-18.

In our first lecture from this chapter, we saw that Wisdom is the Lord Jesus Christ, that He has builded a house, and prepared a feast, and that He is inviting poor simple sinners to turn in to Him and be saved. We now come to the opposite side of the picture. Another woman, but O how different! sits at the door of her house, and cries to the same passengers. She invites them to turn in and partake of “stolen waters, and bread eaten in secret.” But, ah! “her guests are in the depths of hell.” I have little doubt that this second woman represents the devil, the great enemy of God and man.

I. *The name and character:* “A foolish woman is clamorous: she is simple, and knoweth nothing.”

This is the name and character of Satan: “Foolish, simple, knowing nothing.” Satan was once one of the brightest spirits

that stood before the throne of God. He is called Lucifer, son of the morning: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning!” (Isa. 14:12). There is reason to think that of all the creatures, he was the likeliest to the Son of God. All the fallen angels were like morning stars, and Satan was the brightest of them all. When they fell, these bright spirits were darkened — they lost the Holy Spirit. They still remain full of amazing powers and faculties; but all distorted now. Satan himself has lost all his true wisdom. He is very crafty still, full of cunning and lies, but he has no wisdom. He has no true knowledge or understanding. His name is Folly — he is simple, and knoweth nothing.

I shall give three examples of his folly:

1. *In the fall of man.* It was Satan who brought about the fall. He beguiled Eve through his subtlety. He wanted to destroy the glory of God. He wanted to rob God of the praise and glory which a holy world would have given him, and he thought he had succeeded. He smiled when he saw man fall under God’s wrath and curse. But it proved the occasion of far greater glory to God than if man had stood. It proved the occasion of God manifesting His justice, His truth, His grace and love, in quite a new manner; so that God gets far more glory and far louder praise than if man had never fallen. The songs of the redeemed would never have been heard if man had not fallen. Satan thus showed his folly — he is simple, and knoweth nothing.

He wanted to make man miserable. He envied the happiness of Adam and Eve; when he saw poor dust and ashes rejoicing in the love of God, out of which he had been cast, he envied them and resolved to make them miserable. He said: “Ye shall be as gods;” but he meant it as a lie, and so

he deceived them, and brought the world under the curse of God. But God turned it into a blessing to them that are saved. It was the occasion of God sending his Son in our nature, and of our becoming united to Christ, clothed with a divine righteousness, and loved with the same love with which God loves His Son. We did indeed become as gods in a sense which Satan knew nothing of. We are brought far nearer to God, and are far more happy and glorious, than if man had never fallen. He wanted to make man his slave. He wanted to make him his drudge, to do his bidding — his captive, that he might torment him. But man by this became his judge: “Know ye not that we shall judge angels?”

2. *In the death of Christ.* It was Satan who stirred men up to destroy Christ. He opposed Christ from His birth to His death. He moved the Jews and Gentiles against Him. He entered into Judas, and persuaded him to betray Christ. He urged on the crowd to cry, “Crucify Him, crucify Him;” and the soldiers to pierce His hands and His feet. By all this he destroyed himself. Christ, by His death on the cross, destroyed the dominion of the devil over all His own; and so He triumphed over the devil in His cross. By this Satan was shown to be a fool.

3. *In the temptations of the saints.* Satan has great enmity against the children of God. He stands at their right hand to resist their conversion. Afterwards he tries to corrupt them from the simplicity that is in Christ. He shoots fiery darts at them. “He sitteth in the lurking-places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor,” (Ps. 10:8). He seeks whom he may devour, and yet he has never been able to destroy one soul that believes in Jesus: “They shall never perish, neither shall

any pluck them out of My hand.” Their temptations are made the means of keeping them in the dust, and clinging tremblingly to the arm of Jesus — thus Satan is cheated of his prey. Oh, surely ye are witnesses that Satan is simple, and knoweth nothing.

II. *Those whom Satan invites.*

1. *Simple ones, and without heart.* The same persons mentioned in verse 4. I showed you that Christ is caring for those that do not care for Him — those who do not know their danger — those who are like Ephraim, a silly dove without heart — those who have no heart for Christ, no heart for holiness — no heart for prayer — Gallios, who care for none of these things. It is a solemn and affecting truth, that Christ is not only loving them that love Him, and seeking those who are seeking Him, but He is yearning over those of you who are so much lost that you do not seek Him — do not care for Him. “He is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,” [see footnote]. Perhaps some may say, Oh, this is very comfortable doctrine, and we shall remain in our present condition. Ah! but observe, there is another seeking you, saying, “Turn in hither.” The foolish clamorous woman sitteth at the door of her house, on a seat in the high places of the city, crying, “Whoso is simple, turn in hither.” Yes, my brethren, Satan desires to have you, that he may sift you like wheat. Satan is striving to keep you living in your sins, till the day of grace is past and the day of reckoning has come. Every tavern you see is an open mouth of Satan’s dwelling. Every haunt of pleasure — the theatre — the dancing-room — the card-table — these are open doors into Satan’s dwelling, and he is busy inviting you in.

2. *Passengers who go right on their ways.* There are none against whom Satan is so angry, or whom he so much desires to lead aside, as those who go right on their ways. When a man is awakened, and goes right on toward Jesus, crying, “What must I do to be saved?” then Satan begins to allure that man, and get him to turn quickly out of the way. When God spoke the commandments, Israel began to seek the Lord in right earnest. But Satan allured them to turn aside and make the golden calf: “They turned quickly out of the way.” So with Lot’s wife.

When a soul has come to Christ, and goes on his way rejoicing, Folly redoubles her cry, “Turn in hither.” Satan loves well to get a joyful believer to fall. “Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as wheat.” Ah! do not say, I am on the right way, and therefore I am safe; Satan cries to passengers who go right on their ways.

III. *The Invitation:* “Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.”

The pleasures of secret sin form the baits by which Satan allures and destroys thousands. It is not open sin that he first invites to. Many would shrink back if he were to propose open sin all at once. He does not say, Come and be a drunkard — Come and be an open profligate; but he invites you to secret sin. This is the way he destroys simple ones, who are without understanding. He says, Come and take a little secret sin; no one shall ever know. He does not allow you to remember that no sin is secret — that what you do in dark places is all naked and open to the eye of Him with whom you have to do — that the lusts and unclean imaginations in which you delight yourself are all open as day

before the eye of God, He says, They are sweet and pleasant; but he does not tell you that at the end it biteth like an adder. He does not tell you that the end of these things is death.

This is the way he calls those who are under concern, going right on to Christ. Stop, he cries; “Stolen waters are sweet.” Are you going to leave all your pleasures — the glass, the dance, the song, the game, the pleasant companion? May you not take a little secret sin, and be saved too? You do not need to let it be known. Do it secretly, Ah, how many here have been thus turned quickly out of the way!

This is the way he calls those who are Christ’s own, going right on the way of holiness. He invites to secret sin. A skilful fisher lets his fly fall gently on the stream; if he show the line or make the fly splash the water, the fish are alarmed, and the bait is thrown in vain. But he lets it fall gently and secretly upon the stream; the sharp barbed hook is concealed beneath the shining fly, and so the silly fish is caught. So when Satan catches men, he does not show the hook. He says, Take a little secret sin; do it so that none shall see, and none shall know. The poor believer catches at the bait, and feels the iron enter into his soul.

Beware of secret sin. No sin is secret. All is naked and laid open, and all will be made known before an assembled world. Do not say you do not need to fear, for it is but a small temptation. Satan always begins with a small temptation. Take heed of going as far as you can in temptation without committing the sin. Thus fell Noah and Samson, and David and Solomon. “She hath cast down many wounded; yea, many strong men have been slain by her.”

IV. *The end of Satan’s house:* “He knoweth not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell.”

Are there many who hear the voice of Folly? Ah! look to your crowded taverns, teeming with God-defying brawlers — look to your theatres and other haunts of wicked pleasure crowded with shameless worshippers of Satan — look at your crowded steam-boats on the Sabbath, or your crowds of daring Sabbath-breakers that pollute the highway — look to the heaven-defying profanities of the Chartist meetinghouse. All those began with the “stolen waters that are sweet, and the bread eaten in secret that is pleasant.” And what becomes of all that enter there? “The dead are there” — the eternally dead. Ah! this is the end of sin. “What shall the end be of those that obey not the Gospel?” — The depths of hell! Those who are now going right on their ways, who turn aside and die in their sin, sink into the depths of hell.

He knoweth not. Satan hides this from you. When Satan bids you enter, he shows you nothing but what is sweet and pleasant. The cup is sparkling, the lights are glancing — all that your eye can desire to see is there. But ask to see the inner chamber — ask Satan to show you the innermost room: “The dead are there, and her guests are in the depths of hell.”

Choose this day whose voice you will hear. On the one hand, Christ invites you to receive pardon, and a new heart, and eternal life. On the other hand, Satan beckons you to receive stolen waters, and then the depths of hell. O, pray that your eyes may be opened — pray that you may not be deceived for eternity.

Footnote

This text is applicable to the elect only. What follows is John Bunyan’s interpretation of it.

“That the reason why God doth forbear to destroy the world for the wickedness of them that dwell therein, it is for the

sake of the elect; because his work upon them is not fully perfected. “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise” (2 Peter 3:9); no, nor as concerning his threatening neither, — but is long-suffering to us-ward who are the elect; not willing that any of us should perish: But when Christ, head and members, are complete in all things, let the world look for patience and forbearance no longer; for in that self same day the trump of God will sound, and the Lord descend with a shout from heaven, to execute his anger with fury, and his rebukes with flames of fire. Behold, he is now “ready to judge the quick and the dead!” (1 Peter 4:5) “ready to be revealed in the last time!” (1 Peter 1:5). The judge also stands at the door (James 5:9); it is but opening therefore, and his hand is upon you, which most assuredly he will do when his body is full and complete.”

