

**“The Folly of Adultery”**  
**Proverbs 5:1-14**  
**20619**

**Week Thirteen, “Father Knows Best,” Proverbs 1-9**

INTRODUCTION:

In today’s text, the father is again to repeat his frequent admonition: listen! Hear me! Pay attention!

If you have little kids, you know how frequently you have to do that. And, of course, it’s the same with teenagers, isn’t it? You sometimes just want to grab them, shout at them, shake them, and yell, “Would you just listen?”

And that’s kind of a good picture of how I see the father in this text. I think he realizes the son is about to enter the realm of sexual temptation and marriage, and he’s worried about how he will handle it.

And, again, we’re talking about Solomon here. I’m sure his father, David, tried to warn him about sexual temptation . . . but he didn’t listen and more than repeated his father’s sins.

And so now he wants to get his son’s attention.

Friends, we must be open and honest about this subject in the church: everyone can and does struggle with sexual temptation. Period. Refusing to talk about it does no one any good.

But, also, remember this: sex is like fire, as Ray Ortlund Jr. puts it. Sex is like fire, and in the fireplace it keeps the house warm. Outside the fireplace, it burns the house down. We need to keep it in the marital fireplace and stoke that fire as hot as we can!

Anyway, the father has decided that it’s time that he and his son have a talk about sex — so here goes.

**I. About Hearing:**

READ PROVERBS 5:1-2

“[1] My son, be attentive to my wisdom;

incline your ear to my understanding,

[2] that you may keep discretion,

and your lips may guard knowledge.”

It is hard to teach with authority in an area in which you have failed, and that’s likely what is motivating Solomon to demand his son’s attention. He knows this issue nearly destroyed his rule and reign — so he’s desperate to be heard.

And, again, we must all admit we struggle in this area.

READ MATTHEW 5:27-28

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Oh, friends, Jesus says we are guilty of adultery just by looking, lingering and lusting — not just a glance, but allowing it to bloom into lust . . . so we had all better listen.

And the father begs that his son listen and apply.

READ MALACHI 2:7

“For the lips of a priest should guard knowledge, and people should seek instruction from his mouth, for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts.”

We have an obligation to pass wisdom on to the next generation, and that’s what the father is attempting to do here. That’s what it means to “guard knowledge.” You don’t hoard it — you collect it to share it.

Will we listen?

But let’s move on to the crux of the issue.

**II. About Harlots:**

READ PROVERBS 5:3-14

Now we turn to a familiar topic in Proverbs — the strange woman, the prostitute, the adulterous woman — the harlot. And ladies, please hear me when I say this: no passage can say everything. We aren’t singling women out for wickedness here — evil men will certainly get their treatment in Proverbs.

But wicked women are a problem, and they do exist. And we are all vulnerable to their influences and temptations — and it's all against God's plan.

READ I TIMOTHY 3:2

“Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach . . .”

We should all be one-woman kind of men.

And we must also remind ourselves that this issue was abundantly clear in Solomon's day. When Israel entered Canaan, the Canaanite temples were filled with sexual sin — idol worship was consummated by having sex with one of the priests or priestesses, so that language is in view here. That's the harlot. The prostitute. The wicked woman.

Of course, any woman who will engage in immoral conduct is technically an adulterous, but let's break it down.

#### **A. Their conduct**

READ PROVERBS 5:3-4

“[3] For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey,

and her speech is smoother than oil,

[4] but in the end she is bitter as wormwood,

sharp as a two-edged sword.”

Again, the father's words demands we admit to the power of sexual temptation. There's something alluring about the wicked woman to the man's sexual appetite — and the father figure gets that here.

And, of course, in America today, everything is overtly sexual. So good luck avoiding sexual temptation — which makes this text all the more critical.

It is very much a New Testament problem. We're going to be confronted by the actions of the harlot — so what will we do?

READ I CORINTHIANS 6:15-18

“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute?

Never! Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, ‘The two will become one flesh.’ But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.”

READ REVELATION 2:20

“But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.”

And now the father is going to tell us what all Jezebels have in common. They are:

#### 1. Seductive

READ PROVERBS 5:3-4

“[3] For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey,

and her speech is smoother than oil,

[4] but in the end she is bitter as wormwood,

sharp as a two-edged sword.”

Again, we must understand that the harlot's goal is to charm you right out of your morals. She will inflate a man's ego with hollow praise — we must understand that not all the temptation is sexual . . . these are smooth, clever, flattering words.

And your wives are at a disadvantage in this regard — they have to live with you. They know the truth about you. They pay the piper for false flattery . . . the harlot has nothing to lose, though.

And yet we know that all such sin as this is actually going to add badly — sin has a bad track record. Such flattery ends in bitterness; wormwood was a shrub that turned things bitter and was used as a spice.

Here, of course, is something we use admit: her speech is full of lies disguised as cleverness . . . and no one can have an affair without telling numerous lies.

Our speech is supposed to “keep discretion” and “guard knowledge,” not be filled with lie after lie. But such is the call of the harlot.

But moving on to a truth we should also know about the harlot. They are:

## 2. Sinful

READ PROVERBS 5:5

“Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol.”

There is certainly a price for such wickedness, then and now.

READ HEBREWS 13:4

“Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.”

But there’s not just an immediate price for such wickedness — we can’t forget the greater toll of sin. The eternal weight of sin.

READ ROMANS 6:23

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

SHARE GOSPEL

Sin separates us from a holy God, period. But no such sin has greater power to do that — no sin wields greater shame and heartache — than sexual sin.

And so we must understand that there’s a painful price for such sin in the here and now but also in the spiritual realm. And, ultimately, we must rejoice that there is forgiveness available, but only through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

All sinners need forgiveness and grace and mercy as purchased through the shed blood of Jesus Christ — do you know Him?

Have you been forgiven and redeemed?

But we have to move on to the last thing we see about the harlot. They are:

## 3. Senseless

READ PROVERBS 5:6

“She does not ponder the path of life; her ways wander, and she does not know it.”

The deceitful, clever, crafty, untrustworthy person — such as the harlot — is always running a con . . . and so they lose track of what life is really about. Their life losing meaning, even though they aren’t even aware of it after a while.

How sad.

But, understand the language here: these women are not to be pitied; she is lost and wayward, but desperate for company. She is the hunter, not the victim.

We’re not talking about the #metoo movement. We’re not talking about women who have been deceived by smooth talking men and taken advantage of. We’re not talking about children who have been sex trafficked. We’re not talking about victims.

We’re talking about predators.

They are unstable in all their ways, they are wandering or even staggering. The word usage invokes images of God’s judgment on Cain.

READ GENESIS 4:12

“When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.”

Or wicked Israel.

READ NUMBERS 32:13

“And the LORD's anger was kindled against Israel, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years, until all the generation that had done evil in the sight of the LORD was gone.”

This is the price of the harlot.

READ PSALM 107:27

“They reeled and staggered like drunken men and were at their wits' end.”

But the father can’t just continue to rattle off a brutal description of the harlot. He is very aware of what he’s actually trying to do: he is

desperate to get his son's attention. So we hear more of the same language as before.

## **B. The caution**

READ PROVERBS 5:7-8

“[7] And now, O sons, listen to me,

and do not depart from the words of my mouth.

[8] Keep your way far from her,

and do not go near the door of her house.”

O sons, listen to me! Danger, danger, Will Robinson! Hear me, please!

John Phillips breaks these verses down this way: the father is begging the son to be cautious, critical, contented (with his bride) and convicted about sin and adultery.

We'd all do well to live that way, amen?

There is a myth that the grass is always greener on the other side, but the father is cautioned the son to not even get close enough to inspect the grass — keep your way far from her! Do not go near the door of her house!

You can't plan with sin and keep it under control, so don't even get close. The farther you are removed, the less likely you'll fall.

Yes, that's dogmatic separation from sin, but that's wisdom, friends.

Remember Joseph and Potiphar's wife? What did Joseph do? He ran. He fled. He got as far away as he reasonably could, and you could argue it wasn't far enough . . . so God put him in prison so he'd really be safe.

In a sense, the father is saying: keep your hands completely off every other woman. Next week, he is going to say: keep your hands on your wife. It's a good double-punch guys.

And just think through Scripture. This sin got Samson, didn't it? And it got David. It got Solomon.

David's rule was marked by sexual abuse and death in his family because of sexual sin, and he experienced personal and political betrayal — all dating back to his sin with Bathsheba.

Danger, danger, Will Robinson! Do you really want to turn lose these consequences in your life?

And speaking of consequences, that's where the wise father finishes.

## **C. The consequences**

Verses 9-14 are going to detail the price of sexual sin — a detailed list of the costs of immortality or even the curses of immorality. It's unavoidable; it's just a principle of God.

READ DEUTERONOMY 32:29

“If they were wise, they would understand this; they would discern their latter end!”

A wise man counts the cost. A wise man considers the consequences. God is not mocked; what is sown must be reaped, and when we disobey God, our hearts often harden . . . spiraling us deeper into the cycle, by the way.

Your best chance to avoid sin comes before you ever commit it — never forget it!

But let's hear the father's wisdom as he details the consequences of dallying with the harlot.

### 1. Loss of heritage

READ PROVERBS 5:9-10

“[9] lest you give your honor to others

and your years to the merciless,

[10] lest strangers take their fill of your strength,

and your labors go to the house of a foreigner.”

Now, one thing we have to say before we really begin to break down these verses. The pornography industry didn't exist back when these words were given to the church and the world — but, trust me, when it comes to the idea of dishonor, drudgery, debt and disease — all touched on as consequences of sexual sin — the porn industry takes the cake.

These words are, in that sense, even more prophetic. But they have much to say even apart from the industry.

Take, for instance, verses 9-10. There's definitely a loss of heritage via sexual immorality — many a man or woman has traded their honor, their years, their strength and their labors away due to their pursuit of sexual immorality.

Just think about the cost of affairs even in our so-called “enlightened” age. There's divorce court, and custody hearings, and child support, and the list could go on and on.

Financial ruin, loss of jobs, lawsuits, etc.

And sexual sin starts the cycle. The phrase [give] your years to the merciless kind of dovetails with “strangers take their fill of your strength, and “your labors go to the house of a foreigner.”

Sexual sin simply makes life hard. Complicated. Draining. Tension-filled. Merciless.

A hardness comes to your life, and it drains you.

And there's nothing like divorce to demonstrate that last phase: “your labors go to the house of a foreigner.”

Because of sexual sin, you can find yourself paying for another man to live in your house and care for your children and even love your previous spouse.

And it's all, at the end of the day, dishonoring.

But's there more.

## 2. Loss of health

READ PROVERBS 5:11-13

“[11] and at the end of your life you groan,  
when your flesh and body are consumed,  
[12] and you say, “How I hated discipline,  
and my heart despised reproof!  
[13] I did not listen to the voice of my teachers  
or incline my ear to my instructors.”

There's more than a little tip of the cap here to physical health, and we all know the toll that sexual immorality can take in that regard — venereal disease, chronic depression, suicide, abortion . . . it's an ugly road.

And all of those things lead to regret and heartache, and as verse 11 describes, the wasting away of the body. Draining heart and soul.

Verse 12 captures the sorrow and regret so many have expressed after foolishly following the harlot into sin, and it paints a picture of sorrow, depression, high blood pressure — you name it.

As John Philipps has bluntly put it, “The house of the harlot is often the vestibule to the funeral home.”

And as verses 12-13 remind us, it's often only after the deed is done that the conscience awakens . . . and that's entirely too late to avoid the consequences of the sin. It's often how the enemy gets the last laugh.

But it's not the last thing. We talked about dishonor when we discussed the loss of heritage, but now we finish with a different side of that coin.

## 3. Loss of honor

READ PROVERBS 5:14

“I am at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation.”

The early consequences occur one way or another, even behind closed doors. But this verse reminds us that sexual sin almost always winds up coming out into the light . . . and it brings shame to both the individuals involved and the church.

Adultery and sexual immorality brings shame within the corporate body.

READ I CORINTHIANS 5:9-13

“I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people — not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler — not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. ‘Purge the evil person from among you.’”

In the Old Testament, it was a capital offense. Now it's an excommunicable offense. Of course, we don't often get this far in our discipline processes, because people guilty of such sin usually just run to another church.

You can change churches, but you can't run from God's discipline.

And, yet, we can't finish there. Oh, friends, this is a struggle for everyone on some level or another — and so many have fallen in this area.

But we know there's good, good news awaiting those who are truly repentant and willing to get right.

READ II CORINTHIANS 5:17

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

READ REVELATION 2:5

“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.”

God's grace extends even to sexual sin — but let's use it to help us avoid the sin, not find forgiveness of it, amen? Amen!

CONCLUSION: