

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF PROVERBS

FATHERLY TALK ON ADULTERY, PROVERBS 6:20-7:27

A. Wisdom concerning adultery (6:20-35)

1. Parental exhortation to avoid adultery (20-25)

a. It is advice that will guide and protect (20-22), ***My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching. Bind them on your heart always; tie them around your neck. When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you. For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life, to preserve you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress. Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes;***

- 1) Proverbs 3:21-24, *My son, do not lose sight of these— keep sound wisdom and discretion, and they will be life for your soul and adornment for your neck. Then you will walk on your way securely, and your foot will not stumble. If you lie down, you will not be afraid; when you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.*
- 2) Augustine, *You need the Lord's help. You shouldn't rely on yourself to live well.*

b. It will light one's path away from the adulteress (23-24), ***For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life, to preserve you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress.***

- 1) Discipline though painful helps keep a person on the right pathway that leads to life.
 - a) Psalm 119:105, *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*
 - b) Hebrews 12:11, *For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.*

2) Adulteress

- a) It may be translated, *wife of a neighbor.*
- b) It is *married woman* in verse 26.

c. It will warn against the attractiveness of the adulteress (25), ***Do not desire her beauty in your heart, and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes;***

- 1) The passage pictures a sexually promiscuous married woman.
- 2) Tertullian, *We must strengthen ourselves ahead of time against secret and evident manifestations of sin.*

2. Results of committing adultery (26-35)

a. It is costly (26), ***for the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread, but a married woman hunts down a precious life.***

- 1) It can reduce a man to utter poverty.
- 2) A married woman expects more, even to the point of ruin, Proverbs 5:3-5, *For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol;*

b. It brings punishment (27-29), ***Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned? Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? So is he who goes in to his neighbor's wife; none who touches her will go unpunished.***

- 1) Illicit sex is like playing with fire! It is impossible to commit adultery with another man's wife without being harmed.
- 2) Isaac of Nineveh, *do not voluntarily make trial of your mind with lewd reflections which tempt you, because in this way wise men have been darkened and made fools.*

- c. It brings condemnation (30-32), *People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry, but if he is caught, he will pay sevenfold; he will give all the goods of his house. He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself.*
 - 1) People may sympathize with a thief if he is attempting to avoid starvation.
 - 2) One who *steals* another's wife finds no forgiveness and no leniency.
- d. It brings disgrace (33), *He will get wounds and dishonor, and his disgrace will not be wiped away.*
 - 1) Proverbs 5:14, *I am at the brink of utter ruin in the assembled congregation.*
 - 2) It seems that many believe that illicit sex is of greater value than honor.
- e. It brings revenge (34-35), *For jealousy makes a man furious, and he will not spare when he takes revenge. He will accept no compensation; he will refuse though you multiply gifts.*
 - 1) Taking another man's wife will be punished, possibly by the woman's husband.
 - 2) The husband normally blames the man more than his wife.

B. Wisdom concerning the adulteress (7:1-27)

1. Parental exhortation (1-5)

- a. It needs reminding (1-3), *My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you; keep my commandments and live; keep my teaching as the apple of your eye; bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart.*
 - 1) Similar to phylacteries, this teaching is as important as the Word of God because it is God's Wisdom.
 - 2) Augustine, *Souls rise more to spiritual things the more they die to fleshly things.*
- b. It must be accepted (4-5), *Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," and call insight your intimate friend, to keep you from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words.*
 - 1) The young need to receive understanding as they would close family members.
 - 2) Wisdom applied will keep one safe from those who seduce.

2. Opportunity (6-9)

- a. A simple youth passes near the house of a harlot (6-8), *For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice, and I have seen among the simple, I have perceived among the youths, a young man lacking sense, passing along the street near her corner, taking the road to her house*
 - 1) The youth is probably more naive than lustful but he was heading toward temptation.
 - 2) Cyril, *Temptation is like a raging winter stream that is difficult to cross.*
 - 3) Robert Alden, *if you want to avoid the devil, stay away from his neighborhood. If you suspect you might be vulnerable to a particular sin, take steps to avoid it.*
- b. He passes by at night (9), *in the twilight, in the evening, at the time of night and darkness.*
 - 1) Verses 6-23 are almost like an eyewitness account by Solomon.
 - 2) Gregory of Nyssa, *We must never let our minds dwell on anything where pleasure has hid its bait.*
 - 3) Cyprian, *Let us lift our eyes up to heaven, lest the earth deceive us with its delights and enticements.*

3. Enticement (10-20)

- a. By her attire (10), *And behold, the woman meets him, dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart.*
 - 1) She is dressed seductively
 - 2) Augustine, *I don't know what temptations I can resist, and which ones I can't. But there is hope because You are faithful.*

- b. By her behavior (11-12), *She is loud and wayward; her feet do not stay at home; now in the street, now in the market, and at every corner she lies in wait.*
- 1) Loud with crafty intent
 - 2) Mocks her marriage vows by seeking to give sexual favors to others.
- c. By her actions (13-20)
- 1) A kiss, and a bold invitation (13-15), *She seizes him and kisses him, and with bold face she says to him, "I had to offer sacrifices, and today I have paid my vows; so now I have come out to meet you, to seek you eagerly, and I have found you.*
 - a) She covers her illicit action with an invitation to celebrate a religious holiday.
 - b) Her religious activity was probably a pretense, an effort to cloud any sense of wrongdoing she may have had.
 - c) She built up his ego by flattery.
 - 3) A perfect location for sexual intercourse (16-18), *I have spread my couch with coverings, colored linens from Egyptian linen; I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love till morning; let us delight ourselves with love.*
 - a) She described the sensuous nature of her bedroom.
 - b) *take our fill of love*, is a figure of speech that likens sexual relations to drinking from a fountain, Proverbs 5:18, *Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth,*
 - 4) A perfect time while her husband is away (19-20), *For my husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey; he took a bag of money with him; at full moon he will come home.*
 - a) She implies that he will be away for several days.
 - b) The adulteress disregards her covenant relationship, Proverbs, 31:10-11, *An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain.*
4. Acceptance (21-22),
- a. He yields to her wiles (21), *With much seductive speech she persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him.*
 - 1) It was a choice made before he ever met her.
 - 2) Chrysostom, *We have the power to make each part of us instruments of wickedness or righteousness.*
 - b. He quickly responds (22), *All at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a stag is caught fast*
 - 1) He is captured and doesn't even know it.
 - 2) He is oblivious to the danger and has no way of escape.
5. It results in death (23), *till an arrow pierces its liver; as a bird rushes into a snare; he does not know that it will cost him his life.*
- a. Failure to resist the temptation would cost him his life.
 - b. Ecclesiastes 9:12, *For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, and like birds that are caught in a snare, so the children of man are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them.*
 - c. Proverbs 6:32, *He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself.*
6. Parental warning (24-27)
- a. Don't go near the adulteress (24-25), *And now, O sons, listen to me, and be attentive to the words of my mouth. Let not your heart turn aside to her ways; do not stray into her paths,*
 - 1) His trouble probably started with imaginations or fantasies.
 - 2) His trouble was realized when he strayed near her house.
 - 3) Gregory Nazianzen, *It is necessary that we both master ourselves and that God saves us.*

- b. Reasons (26-27), *for many a victim has she laid low, and all her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death.*
 - 1) She has killed many so escape her snares.
 - a) Proverbs 2:16-19, *So you will be delivered from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words, who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God; for her house sinks down to death, and her paths to the departed; none who go to her come back, nor do they regain the paths of life.*
 - b) Proverbs 5:1-5, *My son, be attentive to my wisdom; incline your ear to my understanding, that you may keep discretion, and your lips may guard knowledge. For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol;*
 - 2) Lactantius, *If people seek nothing from pleasure but pleasure itself, they plan their own deaths.*

CONCLUSION

- A. Why is there continuation of discussion on sexual immorality?
 - 1. There is repetition as emphasis due to its importance to God
 - a. God designed covenant relationships, Proverbs 2:16-19,
 - b. David Atkinson, *Sex without commitment is to live a lie.*
 - 2. Repetition due to its importance to mankind.
 - a. It is sin against one's own body, 1 Corinthians 6:18, *Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body.*
 - b. It is sin against one's covenant relationship with God, 1 Corinthians 6:19, *Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own.*
 - c. Adam F. Johnson, *So, not because of the fear of pregnancy, or the fear of the deadly AIDS virus, or because of possible future sexual dysfunction, but because our bodies are corporately members of Christ and individually sacred shrines where God dwells, destined for resurrection, we should abstain from all sexual intercourse outside of marriage and use our body to honor God in all its functions.*
 - 3. Repetition due to the many ways it can take over one's life
 - a. 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.*
 - b. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *There are highly respectable men and women who would never dream of committing an act of adultery, but look at the way in which they enjoy sinning in the mind and in the imagination.*
- B. Lactantius, *Remember that we are being watched at every moment by the One Who will be both Judge and Witness.*