

CHAPTER 7

The scope of this chapter is, as of several before, to warn young men against the lusts of the flesh. Solomon remembered of what ill consequence it was to his father, perhaps found himself, and perceived his son, addicted to it, or at least had observed how many hopeful young men among his subjects had been ruined by those lusts; and therefore he thought he could never say enough to dissuade men from them, that “every one may possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, and not in the lusts of uncleanness.” In this chapter we have,

- I. A general exhortation to get our minds principled and governed by the world of God, as a sovereign antidote against this sin (v. 1-5).
- II. A particular representation of the great danger which unwary young men are in of being inveigled into this snare (v. 6-23).
- III. A serious caution inferred thence, in the close, to take heed of all approaches towards this sin (v. 24-27). We should all pray, “Lord, lead us not into this temptation.”

~~200~~ PROVERBS 7:1-5

THE WORD OF GOD RECOMMENDED

These verses are an introduction to his warning against fleshly lusts, much the same with that, ~~200~~ Proverbs 6:20, etc., and ending (v. 5) as that did (v. 24), *To keep thee from the strange woman*; that is it he aims at; only there he had said, *Keep thy father's commandment*, here (which comes all to one), *Keep my commandments*, for he speaks to us as unto sons. He speaks in God's name; for it is God's *commandments* that we are to *keep*, his *words*, his *law*. The word of God must be to us,

1. As that which we are most careful of. We must keep it as our treasure; we must *lay up God's commandments* with us, lay them up safely, that we may not be robbed of them by the wicked one, v. 1. We must keep it as our life: *Keep my commandments and live* (v. 2), not only, “Keep them,

and you shall live;” but, “Keep them as you would your life, as those that cannot live without them.” It would be death to a good man to be deprived of the word of God, for by it he lives, and not *by bread alone*.

2. As that which we are most tender of: Keep *my law as the apple of thy eye*. A little thing offends the eye, and therefore nature has so well guarded it. We pray, with David, that God would keep us as the apple of his eye (³⁷⁰⁸Psalm 17:8), that our lives and comforts may be precious in his sight; and they shall be so (³¹¹⁸Zechariah 2:8) if we be in like manner tender of his law and afraid of the least violation of it. Those who reproach strict and circumspect walking, as needless preciseness, consider not that the law is to be kept as the apple of the eye, for indeed it is the *apple of our eye*; the law is light; the law in the heart is the eye of the soul.

3. As that which we are proud of and would be ever mindful of (v. 3): “*Bind them upon thy fingers; let them be precious to thee; look upon them as an ornament, as a diamond-ring, as the signet on thy right hand; wear them continually as thy wedding-ring, the badge of thy espousals to God. Look upon the word of God as putting an honour upon thee, as an ensign of thy dignity. Bind them on thy fingers, that they may be constant memorandums to thee of thy duty, that thou mayest have them always in view, as that which is graven upon the palms of thy hands.*”

4. As that which we are fond of and are ever thinking of: *Write them upon the table of thy heart*, as the names of the friends we dearly love, we say, are written in our hearts. *let the word of God dwell richly in us*, and be written there where it will be always at hand to be read. Where sin was written (²⁴⁷⁰Jeremiah 17:1) let the word of God be written. It is the matter of a promise (³⁸⁸⁰Hebrews 8:10, *I will write my law in their hearts*), which makes the precept practicable and easy.

5. As that which we are intimately acquainted and conversant with (v. 4): “*Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister, whom I dearly love and take delight in; and call understanding thy kinswoman, to whom thou art nearly allied, and for whom thou hast a pure affection; call her thy friend, whom thou courtest.*” We must make the word of God familiar to us, consult it, and consult its honour, and take a pleasure in conversing with it.

6. As that which we make use of for our defence and armour, to keep us *from the strange woman*, from sin, that flattering but destroying thing, that adulteress; particularly from the sin of uncleanness, v. 5. Let the word of

God confirm our dread of that sin and our resolutions against it; let it discover to us its fallacies and suggest to us answers to all its flatteries.

~~2006~~ PROVERBS 7:6-23

THE FOOLISH YOUNG MAN

Solomon here, to enforce the caution he had given against the sin of whoredom, tells a story of a young man that was ruined to all intents and purposes by the enticements of an adulterous woman. Such a story as this would serve the lewd profane poets of our age to make a play of, and the harlot with them would be a heroine; nothing would be so entertaining to the audience, nor give them so much diversion, as her arts of beguiling the young gentleman and drawing in the country squire; her conquests would be celebrated as the triumphs of wit and love, and the comedy would conclude very pleasantly; and every young man that saw it acted would covet to be so picked up. Thus *fools make a mock at sin*. But Solomon here relates it, and all wise and good men read it, as a very melancholy story. The impudence of the adulterous woman is very justly looked upon, by all that have any sparks of virtue in them, with the highest indignation, and the easiness of the young man with the tenderest compassion; and the story concludes with sad reflections, enough to make all that read and hear it afraid of the snares of fleshly lusts and careful to keep at the utmost distance from them. It is supposed to be a parable, or imagined case, but I doubt it was too true, and, which is worse, that notwithstanding the warning it gives of the fatal consequences of such wicked courses it is still too often true, and the agents for hell are still playing the same game and with similar success.

Solomon was a magistrate, and, as such, inspected the manners of his subjects, looked often through his casement, that he might see with his own eyes, and made remarks upon those who little thought his eye was upon them, that he might know the better how to make the sword he bore a terror to evil-doers. But here he writes as a minister, a prophet, who is by office a watchman, to give warning of the approach of the enemies, and especially where they lie in ambush, that we may not be ignorant of Satan's devices, but may know where to double our guard. This Solomon does here, where we may observe the account he gives,

I. Of the person tempted, and how he laid himself open to the temptation, and therefore must thank himself if it end in his destruction.

1. He was a *young man*, v. 7. Fleshly lusts are called *youthful lusts* (~~5122~~2 Timothy 2:22), not to extenuate them as tricks of youth, and therefore excusable, but rather to aggravate them, as robbing God of the first and best of our time, and, by debauching the mind when it is tender, laying a foundation for a bad life ever after, and to intimate that young people ought in a special manner to fortify their resolutions against this sin.

2. He was a young man *void of understanding*, that went abroad into the world, not principled as he ought to have been with wisdom and the fear of God, and so ventured to sea without ballast, without pilot, cord, or compass; he knew not how to depart from evil, which is the best understanding, ~~3333~~Job 28:28. Those become an easy prey to Satan who, when they have arrived to the stature of men, have scarcely the understanding of children.

3. He kept bad company. He was a *young man among the youths*, a silly young man *among the simple* ones. If, being conscious of his own weakness, he had associated with those that were older and wiser than himself, there would have been hopes of him. Christ, at twelve years old, conversed with the doctors, to set young people an example of this. But, if those that are simple choose such for their companions as are like themselves, simple they will still be, and hardened in their simplicity.

4. He was sauntering, and had nothing to do, but *passed through the street* as one that knew not how to dispose of himself. One of the sins of filthy Sodom was *abundance of idleness*, ~~3160~~Ezekiel 16:49. He went in a starchy stately manner, so (it is said) the word signifies. He appeared to be a nice formal fop, the top of whose accomplishments was to dress well and walk with a good air; fit game for that bird of prey to fly at.

5. He was a night-walker, that hated and scorned the business that is to be done by day-light, from which the evening calls men in to their repose; and, having fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, he begins to move *in the twilight in the evening*, v. 9. And he chooses *the black and dark night* as fittest for his purpose, not the moonlight nights, when he might be discovered.

6. He steered his course towards the house of one that he thought would entertain him, and that he might be merry with; he went *near her corner, the way to her house* (v. 8), contrary to Solomon's advice (³⁰⁸⁸Proverbs 5:8), *Come not nigh the door of her house*. Perhaps he did not know it was the way to an infamous house, but, however, it was a way that he had no business in; and when we have nothing to do the devil will quickly find us something to do. We must take heed, not only of idle days, but of idle evenings, lest they prove inlets to temptation.

II. Of the person tempting, not a common prostitute, for she was a married wife (v. 19), and, for aught that appears, lived in reputation among her neighbours, not suspected of any such wickedness, and yet, in the *twilight of the evening*, when her husband was abroad, abominably impudent. She is here described,

1. By her dress. She had the *attire of a harlot* (v. 10), gaudy and flaunting, to set her off as a beauty; perhaps she was painted as Jezebel, and went with her neck and breasts bare, loose, and *en deshabelle*. The purity of the heart will show itself in the modesty of the dress, which *becomes women professing godliness*.

2. By her craft and management. She is *subtle of heart*, mistress of all the arts of wheedling, and knowing how by all her caresses to serve her own base purposes.

3. By her temper and carriage. *She is loud and stubborn*, talkative and self-willed, noisy and troublesome, wilful and headstrong, all tongue, and will have her saying, right or wrong, impatient of check and control, and cannot bear to be counselled, much less reproved, by husband or parents, ministers or friends. She is a *daughter of Belial*, that will endure no yoke.

4. By her place, not her own house; she hates the confinement and employment of that; her *feet abide not there* any longer than needs must. She is all for gadding abroad, changing place and company. *Now is she without* in the country, under pretence of taking the air, now *in the streets* of the city, under pretence of seeing how the market goes. She is here, and there, and every where but where she should be. She *lies in wait at every corner*, to pick up such as she can make a prey of. Virtue is a penance to those to whom home is a prison.

III. Of the temptation itself and the management of it. She met the young spark. Perhaps she knew him; however she knew by his fashions that he was such a one as she wished for; so she *caught him about the neck and kissed him*, contrary to all the rules of modesty (v. 13), and waited not for his compliments or courtship, but *with an impudent face* invited him not only to *her house*, but to *her bed*.

1. She courted him to sup with her (v. 14, 15): *I have peace-offerings with me*. Hereby she gives him to understand,

(1.) Her prosperity, that she was compassed about with so many blessings that she had occasion to offer peace-offerings, in token of joy and thankfulness; she was before-hand in the world, so that he needed not fear having his pocket picked.

(2.) Her profession of piety. She had been to-day at the temple, and was as well respected there as any that worshipped in the courts of the Lord. She had paid her vows, and, as she thought, made all even with God Almighty, and therefore might venture upon a new score of sins. Note, The external performances of religion, if they do not harden men against sin, harden them in it, and embolden carnal hearts to venture upon it, in hopes that when they come to count and discount with God he will be found as much in debt to them for their peace-offerings and their vows as they to him for their sins. But it is sad that a show of piety should become the shelter of iniquity (which really doubles the shame of it, and makes it more exceedingly sinful) and that men should baffle their consciences with those very things that should startle them. The Pharisees made long prayers, that they might the more plausibly carry on their covetous and mischievous provisions. The greatest part of the flesh of the peace-offerings was by the law returned back to the offerers, to feast upon with their friends, which (if they were peace-offerings of thanksgiving) was to be all eaten *the same day and none of it left until the morning*, ^(Leviticus) Leviticus 7:15. This law of charity and generosity is abused to be a colour for gluttony and excess: “Come,” says she, “come home with me, for I have good cheer enough, and only want good company to help me off with it.” It was a pity that the peace-offerings should thus become, in a bad sense, sin-offerings, and that what was designed for the honour of God should become the food and fuel of a base lust. But this is not all.

(4.) To strengthen the temptation,

[1.] She pretends to have a very great affection for him above any man: “*Therefore, because I have a good supper upon the table, I came forth to meet thee, for no friend in the world shall be so welcome to it as thou shalt, v. 15. Thou art he whom I came on purpose to seek, to seek diligently, came myself, and would not send a servant.*” Surely he cannot deny her his company when she put such a value upon it, and would take all this pains to obtain the favour of it. Sinners take pains to do mischief, and are as the roaring lion himself; they *go about seeking to devour*, and yet pretend they are seeking to oblige.

[2.] She would have it thought that Providence itself countenanced her choice of him for her companion; for how quickly had she found him whom she sought!

2. She courted him to lie with her. They will sit down to eat and drink, and then rise up to play, to play the wanton, and there is a bed ready for them, where he shall find that which will be in all respects agreeable to him. To please his eye, it is *decked with coverings of tapestry and carved works*, exquisitely fine; he never saw the like. To please his touch, the sheets are not of home-spun cloth; they are far-fetched and dear bought; they are of *fine linen of Egypt*, v. 16. To gratify his smell, it is *perfumed with the sweetest scents*, v. 17. Come, therefore, and *let us take our fill of love*, v. 18. Of *love*, does she say? Of *lust* she means, brutish lust; but it is a pity that the name of love should be thus abused. True love is from heaven; this is from hell. How can those pretend to solace themselves and love one another who are really ruining themselves and one another?

3. She anticipated the objection which he might make of the danger of it. Is she not another man's wife, and what if her husband should catch them in adultery, in the very act? he will make them pay dearly for their sport, and where will the solace of their love be then? “Never fear,” says she, “the *good man is not at home*” (v. 19); she does not call him her *husband*, for she *forsakes the guide of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God*; but “the *good man of the house, whom I am weary of.*” Thus Potiphar's wife, when she spoke of her husband, would not call him so, but *he*, ^{Gen}Genesis 39:14. It is therefore with good reason taken notice of, to Sarah's praise, that she spoke respectfully of her husband, calling him *lord*. She pleases herself with this that he is not at home, and therefore she is melancholy if she have not some company, and therefore whatever company she has she may be free with them, for she is from under his eye,

and he shall never know. But will he not return quickly? No: “he has *gone a long journey*, and cannot return on a sudden; he *appointed the day* of his return, and he never comes home sooner than he says he will. *He has taken a bag of money with him*, either,”

(1.) “To trade with, to buy goods with and he will not return till he has laid it all out. It is a pity that an honest industrious man should be thus abused, and advantage taken of his absence, when it is upon business, for the good of his family.” Or,

(2.) “To spend and revel with.” Whether justly or not, she insinuates that he was a bad husband; so she would represent him, because she was resolved to be a bad wife, and must have that for an excuse; it is often groundlessly suggested, but is never a sufficient excuse. “He follows his pleasures, and wastes his estate abroad” (says she), “and why should not I do the same at home?”

IV. Of the success of the temptation. Promising the young man every thing that was pleasant, and impunity in the enjoyment, she gained her point, v. 21. It should seem, the youth, though very simple, had no ill design, else a word, a beck, a wink, would have served, and there would have been no need of all this harangue; but though he did not intend any such thing, nay, had something in his conscience that opposed it, yet *with her much fair speech she caused him to yield*. His corruptions at length triumphed over his convictions, and his resolutions were not strong enough to hold out against such artful attacks as these, but *with the flattery of her lips she forced him*; he could not stop his ear against such a charmer, but surrendered himself her captive. Wisdom's maidens, who plead her cause, and have reason on their side, and true and divine pleasures to invite men to, have a deaf ear turned to them, and with all their rhetoric cannot compel men to come in, but such is the dominion of sin in the hearts of men that its allurements soon prevail by falsehood and flattery. With what pity does Solomon here look upon this foolish young man, when he sees him follow the adulterous woman!

(1.) He gives him up for gone; alas! he is undone. he goes to the slaughter (for houses of uncleanness are slaughter-houses to precious souls); a dart will presently *strike through his liver*; going without his breast-plate, he will receive his death's wound, v. 23. It is his life, his precious life, that is thus irrecoverably thrown away, he is perfectly lost to all good; his

conscience is debauched; a door is opened to all other vices, and this will certainly end in his endless damnation.

(2.) That which makes his case the more piteous is that he is not himself aware of his misery and danger; he goes blindfold, nay, he goes laughing to his ruin. The ox thinks he is led to the pasture when he is led to the slaughter; *the fool* (that is, the drunkard, for, of all sinners, drunkards are the greatest fools) is led *to the correction of the stocks*, and is not sensible of the shame of it, but goes to it as if he were going to a play. The *bird* that *hastes to the snare* looks only at the bait, and promises herself a good bit from that, and considers not that *it is for her life*. Thus this unthinking unwary young man dreams of nothing but the pleasures he shall have in the embraces of the harlot, while really he is running headlong upon his ruin. Though Solomon does not here tell us that he put the law in execution against this base harlot, yet we have no reason to think but that he did, he was himself so affected with the mischief she did and had such an indignation at it.

~~2024~~ PROVERBS 7:24-27

THE SEDUCTION OF A YOUTH

We have here the application of the foregoing story: “*Hearken to me therefore, and not to such seducers (v. 24); give ear to a father, and not to an enemy.*”

1. “Take good counsel when it is given you. *Let not thy heart decline to her ways (v. 25); never leave the paths of virtue, though strait and narrow, solitary and up-hill, for the way of the adulteress, though green, and broad, and crowded with company. Do not only keep thy feet from those ways, but let not so much as thy heart incline to them; never harbour a disposition this way, nor think otherwise than with abhorrence of such wicked practices as these. Let reason, and conscience, and the fear of God ruling in the heart, check the inclinations of the sensual appetite. If thou goest in her paths, in any of the paths that lead to this sin, thou goest astray, thou art out of the right way, the safe way; therefore take heed, go not astray, lest thou wander endlessly.*”

2. “Take fair warning when it is given you.”

(1.) “Look back, and see what mischief this sin has done. The adulteress has been the ruin not of here and there one, but she has *cast down many wounded.*” Thousands have been undone, now and for ever, by this sin; and those not only the weak and simple youths, such as he was of whom he had now spoken, but *many strong men have been slain by her*, v. 26. Herein, perhaps, he has an eye especially to Samson, who was slain by this sin, and perhaps to David too, who by this sin entailed a sword upon his house, though so far the Lord took it away that he himself should not die. These were men not only of great bodily strength, but of eminent wisdom and courage, and yet their fleshly lusts prevailed over them. *Howl, fir-trees, if the cedars be shaken. Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.*

(2.) “Look forward with an eye of faith, and see what will be in the end of it,” v. 27. Her house, though richly decked and furnished, and called a *house of pleasure*, is the *way to hell*; and her chambers are the stair-case that goes down to the *chambers of death* and everlasting darkness. The cup of fornication must shortly be exchanged for the cup of trembling; and the flames of lust, if not quenched by repentance and mortification, will burn to the lowest hell. Therefore *stand in awe and sin not.*