

# CHAPTER 6

In this chapter we have,

- I.** A caution against rash suretiship (v. 1-5).
- II.** A rebuke to slothfulness (v. 6-11).
- III.** The character and fate of a malicious mischievous man (v. 12-15).
- IV.** An account of seven things which God hates (v. 16-19).
- V.** An exhortation to make the word of God familiar to us (v. 20-23).
- VI.** A repeated warning of the pernicious consequences of the sin of whoredom (v. 24-35). We are here dissuaded from sin very much by arguments borrowed from our secular interests, for it is not only represented as damning in the other world, but as impoverishing in this.

## ~~THE~~ PROVERBS 6:1-5

### CAUTIONS AGAINST SURETISHIP

It is the excellency of the word of God that it teaches us not only divine wisdom for another world, but human prudence for this world, that we may order our affairs with discretion; and this is one good rule, To avoid suretiship, because by it poverty and ruin are often brought into families, which take away that comfort in relations which he had recommended in the foregoing chapter.

- 1.** We must look upon suretiship as a snare and decline it accordingly, v. 1,
- 2.** “It is dangerous enough for a man to be bound for his friend, though it be one whose circumstances he is well acquainted with, and well assured of his sufficiency, but much more to *strike the hands with a stranger*, to become surety for one whom thou dost not know to be either able or honest.” Or the stranger here with whom the hand is stricken is the creditor, “the usurer to whom thou art become bound, and yet as to thee he is a stranger, that is, thou owest him nothing, nor hast had any dealings

with him. If thou hast rashly entered into such engagements, either wheedled into them or in hopes to have the same kindness done for thee another time, know that *thou art snared with the words of thy mouth*; it was easily done, with a word's speaking; it was but setting thy hand to a paper, a bond is soon sealed and delivered, and a recognizance entered into. But it will not be so easily got clear of; thou art *in a snare* more than thou art aware of." See how little reason we have to make light of tongues; if by a word of our mouth we may become indebted to men, and lie open to their actions, by the words of our mouth we may become obnoxious to God's justice, and even so may be snared. It is false that words are but wind: they are often snares.

**2.** If we have been drawn into this snare, it will be our wisdom by all means, with all speed, to get out of it, v. 3-5. It sleeps for the present; we hear nothing of it. The debt is not demanded; the principal says, "Never fear, we will take care of it." But still the bond is in force, interest is running on, the creditor may come upon thee when he will and perhaps may be hasty and severe, the principal may prove either knavish or insolvent, and then thou must rob thy wife and children, and ruin thy family, to pay that which thou didst neither nor drink for. And therefore *deliver thyself*; rest not till either the creditor give up the bond or the principal give thee counter-security; when *thou art come into the hand of thy friend*, and he has advantage against thee, it is no time to threaten or give ill language (that will provoke and make ill worse), but *humble thyself*, beg and pray to be discharged, go down on thy knees to him, and give him all the fair words thou canst; engage thy friends to speak for thee; leave no stone unturned till thou hast agreed with thy adversary and compromised the matter, so that thy bond may not come against thee or thine. This is a care which may well break thy sleep, and let it do so till thou hast got through. "*Give not sleep to thy eyes till thou hast delivered thyself*. Strive and struggle to the utmost, and hasten with all speed, *as a roe* or *a bird* delivers herself out of this snare of *the fowler* or hunter. Delays are dangerous, and feeble efforts will not serve." See what care God, in his word, has taken to make men good husbands of their estates, and to teach them prudence in the management of them. *Godliness* has precepts, as well as promises, relating to *the life that now is*.

But how are we to understand this? We are not to think it is unlawful in any case to become surety, or bail, for another; it may be a piece of justice or charity; he that has friends may see cause in this instance to show

himself friendly, and it may be no piece of imprudence. Paul became bound for Onesimus, <sup><5019></sup>Philemon 1:19. We may help a young man into business that we know to be honest and diligent, and gain him credit by passing our word for him, and so do him a great kindness without any detriment to ourselves. But,

**1.** It is every man's wisdom to keep out of debt as much as may be, for it is an incumbrance upon him, entangles him in the world, puts him in danger of doing wrong or suffering wrong. The *borrower is servant to the lender*, and makes himself very much a slave to this world. Christians therefore, who are *bought with a price*, should not thus, without need, make themselves *the servants of men*, <sup><4023></sup>1 Corinthians 7:23.

**2.** It is great folly to entangle ourselves with necessitous people, and to become bound for their debts, that are ever and anon taking up money, and lading, as we say, out of one hole into another, for it is ten to one but, some time or other, it will come upon us. A man ought never to be bound as surety for more than he is both able and willing to pay, and can afford to pay without wronging his family, in case the principal fail, for he ought to look upon it as his own debt. Ecclesiasticus 8:13, *Be not surety above thy power, for, if thou be surety, thou must take care to pay it.*

**3.** It is a necessary piece of after-wit, if we have foolishly entangled ourselves, to get out of the snare as fast as we can, to lose no time, spare no pains, and stick at no submission to make ourselves safe and easy, and get our affairs into a good posture. It is better to humble ourselves for an accommodation than to ruin ourselves by our stiffness and haughtiness. *Make sure thy friend* by getting clear from thy engagements from him; for rash suretiship is as much the bane of friendship as that which is prudent is sometimes the bond of it. Let us take heed lest we any way make ourselves guilty of other men's sins against God (<sup><5022></sup>1 Timothy 5:22), for that is worse, and much more dangerous, than being bound for other men's debts; and, if we must be in all this care to get our debts to men forgiven, much more to get our peace made with God. "*Humble thyself* to him; *make sure of Christ thy friend*, to intercede for thee; pray earnestly that thy sins may be pardoned, and thou mayest be delivered from going down to the pit, and it shall not be in vain. *Give not sleep to thy eyes nor slumber to thy eye lids*, till this be done."

## ~~2066~~ PROVERBS 6:6-11

### SLOTHFULNESS REPROVED

Solomon, in these verses, addresses himself to the sluggard who loves his ease, lives in idleness, minds no business, sticks to nothing, brings nothing to pass, and in a particular manner is careless in the business of religion. Slothfulness is as sure a way to poverty, though not so short a way, as rash suretiship. He speaks here to the sluggard,

**I.** By way of instruction, v. 6-8. He sends him to school, for sluggards must be schooled. He is to take him to school himself, for, if the scholar will take no pains, the master must take the more; the sluggard is not willing to come to school to him (dreaming scholars will never love wakeful teachers) and therefore he has found him out another school, as low as he can desire. Observe,

**1.** The master he is sent to school to: *Go to the ant, to the bee*, so the Septuagint. Man is taught more than the beasts of the earth, and made wiser than the fowls of heaven, and yet is so degenerated that he may learn wisdom from the meanest insects and be shamed by them. When we observe the wonderful sagacities of the inferior creatures we must not only give glory to the God of nature, who has made them thus strangely, but receive instruction to ourselves; by spiritualizing common things, we may make the things of God both easy and ready to us, and converse with them daily.

**2.** The application of mind that is required in order to learn of this master: *Consider her ways*. The sluggard is so because he does not consider; nor shall we ever learn to any purpose, either by the word or the works of God, unless we set ourselves to consider. Particularly, if we would imitate others in that which is good, we must consider their ways, diligently observe what they do, that we may do likewise, ~~2087~~Philippians 3:17.

**3.** The lesson that is to be learned. In general, learn wisdom, *consider, and be wise*; that is the thing we are to aim at in all our learning, not only to be knowing, but to be wise. In particular, learn to *provide meat in summer*; that is,

(1.) We must prepare for hereafter, and not mind the present time only, not eat up all, and lay up nothing, but in gathering time treasure up for a spending time. Thus provident we must be in our worldly affairs, not with an anxious care, but with a prudent foresight; lay in for winter, for straits and wants that may happen, and for old age; much more in the affairs of our souls. We must provide meat and food, that which is substantial and will stand us in stead, and which we shall most need. In the enjoyment of the means of grace provide for the want of them, in life for death, in time for eternity; in the state of probation and preparation we must provide for the state of retribution.

(2.) We must take pains, and labour in our business, yea, though we labour under inconveniences. Even *in summer*, when the weather is hot, the ant is busy in *gathering food* and laying it up, and does not indulge her ease, nor take her pleasure, as the grasshopper, that sings and sports in the summer and then perishes in the winter. The ants help one another; if one have a grain of corn too big for her to carry home, her neighbours will come in to her assistance.

(3.) We must improve opportunities, we must gather when it is to be had, as the ant does in summer and harvest, in the proper time. It is our wisdom to improve the season while that favours us, because that may be done then which cannot be done at all, or not so well done, at another time. *Walk while you have the light.*

4. The advantages which we have of learning this lesson above what the ant has, which will aggravate our slothfulness and neglect if we idle away our time. She has *no guides, overseers, and rulers*, but does it of herself, following the instinct of nature; the more shame for us who do not in like manner follow the dictates of our own reason and conscience, though besides them we have parents, masters, ministers, magistrates, to put us in mind of our duty, to check us for the neglect of it, to quicken us to it, to direct us in it, and to call us to an account about it. The greater helps we have for working out our salvation the more inexcusable shall we be if we neglect it.

II. By way of reproof, v. 9-11. In these verses,

1. He expostulates with the sluggard, rebuking him and reasoning with him, calling him to his work, as a master does his servant that has overslept himself: "*How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? How long wouldst*

thou sleep if one would let thee alone? *When wilt thou think it time to arise?*” Sluggards should be roused with a *How long?* This is applicable,

**(1.)** To those that are slothful in the way of work and duty, in the duties of their particular calling as men or their general calling as Christians. “*How long wilt thou waste thy time, and when wilt thou be a better husband of it? How long wilt thou love thy ease, and when wilt thou learn to deny thyself, and to take pains? How long wilt thou bury thy talents, and when wilt thou begin to trade with them? How long wilt thou delay, and put off, and trifle away thy opportunities, as one regardless of hereafter; and when wilt thou stir up thyself to do what thou hast to do, which, if it be not done, will leave thee for ever undone?*”

**(2.)** To those that are secure in the way of sin and danger: “Hast thou not slept enough? Is it not far in the day? Does not thy Master call? Are not the Philistines upon thee? When then wilt thou arise?”

**2.** He exposes the frivolous excuses he makes for himself, and shows how ridiculous he makes himself. When he is roused he stretched himself, and begs, as for alms, for more *sleep*, more *slumber*; he is well in his warm bed, and cannot endure to think of rising, especially of rising to work. But, observe, he promises himself and his master that he will desire but *a little more sleep, a little more slumber*, and then he will get up and go to his business. But herein he deceives himself; the more a slothful temper is indulged the more it prevails; let him sleep awhile, and slumber awhile, and still he is in the same tune; still he asks for *a little more sleep, yet a little more*; he never thinks he has enough, and yet, when he is called, pretends he will come presently. Thus men's great work is left undone by being put off yet a little longer, *de die in diem — from day to day*; and they are cheated of all their time by being cheated of the present moments. A little more sleep proves an everlasting sleep. *Sleep on now, and take your rest.*

**3.** He gives him fair warning of the fatal consequences of his slothfulness, v. 11.

**(1.)** *Poverty and want* will certainly come upon those that are slothful in their business. If men neglect their affairs, they not only will not go forward, but they will go backward. He that leaves his concerns at sixes and sevens will soon see them go to wreck and ruin, and bring his noble to nine-pence. Spiritual poverty comes upon those that are slothful in the

service of God; those will want oil, when they should use it, that provide it not in their vessels.

(2.) “It will come silently and insensibly, will grow upon thee, and come step by step, *as one that travels*, but will without fail come at last.” *It will leave thee as naked as if thou wert stripped by a highwayman*; so bishop Patrick.

(3.) “It will come irresistibly, *like an armed man*, whom thou canst not oppose nor make thy part good against.”

## ~~AND~~ PROVERBS 6:12-19

### THE SEVEN ABOMINATIONS

Solomon here gives us,

**I.** The characters of one that is mischievous to man and dangerous to be dealt with. If the slothful are to be condemned, that do nothing, much more those that do ill, and contrive to do all the ill they can. It is a *naughty person* that is here spoken of, Hebrews *A man of Belial*; I think it should have been so translated, because it is a term often used in scripture, and this is the explication of it. Observe,

**1.** How a man of Belial is here described. He is *a wicked man*, that makes a trade of doing evil, especially with his tongue, for he *walks* and works his designs *with a froward mouth* (v. 12), by lying and perverseness, and a direct opposition to God and man. He says and does every thing,

(1.) Very artfully and with design. He has the subtlety of the serpent, and carries on his projects with a great deal of craft and management (v. 13), *with his eyes, with his feet, with his fingers*. He expresses his malice *when he dares not speak out* (so some), or, rather, thus he carries on his plot; those about him, whom he makes use of as the tools of his wickedness, understand the ill meaning of a wink of his eye, a stamp of his feet, the least motion of his fingers. He gives orders for evil-doing, and yet would not be thought to do so, but has ways of concealing what he does, so that he may not be suspected. He is a close man, and upon the reserve; those only shall be let into the secret that would do any thing he would have

them to do. He is a cunning man, and upon the trick; he has a language by himself, which an honest man is not acquainted with, nor desires to be.

(2.) Very spitefully and with ill design. It is not so much ambition or covetousness that *is in his heart*, as downright *frowardness*, malice, and ill nature. He aims not so much to enrich and advance himself as to do an ill turn to those about him. He is *continually devising* one *mischief* or other, purely for mischief-sake — a man of Belial indeed, of the devil, resembling him not only in subtlety, but in malice.

2. What his doom is (v. 15): *His calamity shall come and he shall be broken*; he that devised mischief shall fall into mischief. His ruin shall come,

(1.) Without warning. It shall come suddenly: *Suddenly shall he be broken*, to punish him for all the wicked arts he had to surprise people into his snares.

(2.) Without relief. He shall be irreparably broken, and never able to piece again: *He shall be broken without remedy*. What relief can he expect that has disoblged all mankind? *He shall come to his end and none shall help him*, <sup>27115</sup>Daniel 11:45.

II. A catalogue of those things which are in a special manner odious to God, all which are generally to be found in those men of Belial whom he had described in the foregoing verses; and the last of them (which, being the seventh, seems especially to be intended, because he says they are six, yea, seven) is part of his character, that he *sows discord*. God hates sin; he hates every sin; he can never be reconciled to it; he hates nothing but sin. But there are some sins which he does in a special manner hate; and all those here mentioned are such as are injurious to our neighbour. It is an evidence of the good-will God bears to mankind that those sins are in a special manner provoking to him which are prejudicial to the comfort of human life and society. *Therefore* the men of Belial must expect their ruin to *come suddenly*, and *without remedy*, because their practices are such as the Lord hates and *are an abomination to him*, v. 16. Those things which God hates it is no thanks to us to hate in others, but we must hate them in ourselves.

1. Haughtiness, conceitedness of ourselves, and contempt of others — *a proud look*. There are seven things that God hates, and pride is the first,



because it is at the bottom of much sin and gives rise to it. God sees the pride in the heart and hates it there; but, when it prevails to that degree that the show of men's countenance witnesses against them that they overvalue themselves and undervalue all about them, this is in a special manner hateful to him, for then pride is proud of itself and sets shame at defiance.

**2.** Falsehood, and fraud, and dissimulation. Next to a *proud look* nothing is more an abomination to God than *a lying tongue*; nothing more sacred than truth, nor more necessary to conversation than speaking truth. God and all good men hate and abhor lying.

**3.** Cruelty and blood-thirstiness. The devil was, from the beginning, a liar and a murderer (~~John~~ John 8:44), and therefore, as *a lying tongue*, so *hands that shed innocent blood* are hateful to God, because they have in them the devil's image and do him service.

**4.** Subtlety in the contrivance of sin, wisdom to do evil, *a heart that designs* and a head that *devises wicked imaginations*, that is acquainted with the depths of Satan and knows how to carry on a covetous, envious, revengeful plot, most effectually. The more there is of craft and management in sin the more it is an abomination to God.

**5.** Vigour and diligence in the prosecution of sin — *feet that are swift in running to mischief*, as if they were afraid of losing time or were impatient of delay in a thing they are so greedy of. The policy and vigilance, the eagerness and industry, of sinners, in their sinful pursuits, may shame us who go about that which is good so awkwardly and so coldly.

**6.** False-witness bearing, which is one of the greatest mischiefs that the wicked imagination can devise, and against which there is least fence. There cannot be a greater affront to God (to whom in an oath appeal is made) nor a greater injury to our neighbour (all whose interests in this world, even the dearest, lie open to an attack of this kind) than knowingly to give in a false testimony. There are seven things which God hates, and lying involves two of them; he hates it, and doubly hates it.

**7.** Making mischief between relations and neighbours, and using all wicked means possible, not only to alienate their affections one from another, but to irritate their passions one against another. The God of love and peace hates *him that sows discord among brethren*, for he delights in concord. Those that by tale-bearing and slandering, by carrying ill-natured

stories, aggravating every thing that is said and done, and suggesting jealousies and evil surmises, blow the coals of contention, are but preparing for themselves a fire of the same nature.

## ~~202~~ PROVERBS 6:20-35

### PARENTAL EXHORTATIONS

Here is,

**I.** A general exhortation faithfully to adhere to the word of God and to take it for our guide in all our actions.

**1.** We must look upon the word of God both as a light (v. 23) and as a law, v. 20, 23.

**(1.)** By its arguments it is a light, which our understandings must subscribe to; it *is a lamp* to our eyes for discovery, and so to our feet for direction. The word of God reveals to us truths of eternal certainty, and is built upon the highest reason. Scripture-light is the sure light.

**(2.)** By its authority it is a law, which our wills must submit to. As never such a light shone out of the schools of the philosophers, so never such a law issued from the throne of any prince, so well framed, and so binding. It is such a law as is a lamp and a light, for it carries with it the evidence of its own goodness.

**2.** We must receive it as *our father's commandment* and *the law of our mother*, v. 20. It is God's commandment and his law. But,

**(1.)** Our parents directed us to it, put it into our hands, trained us up in the knowledge and observance of it, its original and obligation being most sacred. We believe indeed, not for their saying, for we have tried it ourselves and find it to be of God; but we were beholden to them for recommending it to us, and see all the reason in the world to *continue in the things we have learned, knowing of whom we have learned them.*

**(2.)** The cautions, counsels, and commands which our parents gave us agree with the word of God, and therefore we must hold them fast. Children, when they are grown up, must remember *the law of a good mother*, as well as the *commandment* of a good father, Ecclesiasticus 3:2.

*The Lord has given the father honour over the children and has confirmed the authority of the mother over the sons.*

**3.** We must retain the word of God and the good instructions which our parents gave us out of it.

**(1.)** We must never cast them off, never think it a mighty achievement (as some do) to get clear of the restraints of a good education: *“Keep thy father's commandment, keep it still, and never forsake it.”*

**(2.)** We must never lay them by, no, not for a time (v. 21): *Bind them continually*, not only *upon thy hand* (as Moses had directed, ~~Deuteronomy~~ Deuteronomy 6:8) but *upon thy heart*. Phylacteries upon the hand were of no value at all, any further than they occasioned pious thoughts and affections in the heart. There the word must be written, there it must be hid, and laid close to the conscience. *Tie them about thy neck*, as an ornament, a bracelet, or gold chain, — *about thy throat* (so the word is); let them be a guard upon that pass; tie them about thy throat, that no forbidden fruit may be suffered to go in nor any evil word suffered to go out through the throat; and thus a great deal of sin would be prevented. Let the word of God be always ready to us, and let us feel the impressions of it, as of that which is bound upon our hearts and about our necks.

**4.** We must make use of the word of God and of the benefit that is designed us by it. If we bind it continually upon our hearts,

**(1.)** It will be our guide, and we must follow its direction. *“When thou goest, it shall lead thee* (v. 22); it shall lead thee into, and lead thee in, the good and right way, shall lead thee from, and lead thee out of, every sinful dangerous path. It will say unto thee, when thou art ready to turn aside, *This is the way; walk in it*. It will be that to thee that the pillar of cloud and fire was to Israel in the wilderness. Be led by that, let it be thy rule, and then thou shalt be led by the Spirit; he will be thy monitor and support.”

**(2.)** It will be our guard, and we must put ourselves under the protection of it: *“When thou sleepest, and liest exposed to the malignant powers of darkness, it shall keep thee; thou shalt be safe, and shalt think thyself so.”* If we govern ourselves by the precepts of the word all day, and make conscience of the duty God has commanded to us, we may shelter ourselves under the promises of the word at night, and take the comfort of the deliverances God does and will command for us.

**(3.)** It will be our companion, and we must converse with it: “*When thou awakest in the night, and knowest not how to pass away thy waking minutes, if thou pleasest, it shall talk with thee, and entertain thee with pleasant meditations in the night-watch; when thou awakest in the morning, and art contriving the work of the day, it shall talk with thee about it, and help thee to contrive for the best,*” <sup><100></sup>Psalm 1:2. The word of God has something to say to us upon all occasions, if we would but enter into discourse with it, would ask it what it has to say, and give it the hearing. And it would contribute to our close and comfortable walking with God all day if we would begin with him in the morning and let his word be the subject of our first thoughts. *When I awake I am still with thee;* we are so if the word be still with us.

**(4.)** It will be our life; for, as the law *is a lamp and a light* for the present, so the *reproofs of instruction are the way of life*. Those reproofs of the word which not only show us our faults, but instruct us how to do better, are the way that leads to life, eternal life. Let not faithful reproofs therefore, which have such a direct tendency to make us happy, ever make us uneasy.

**II.** Here is a particular caution against the sin of uncleanness.

**1.** When we consider how much this iniquity abounds, how heinous it is in its own nature, of what pernicious consequence it is, and how certainly destructive to all the seeds of the spiritual life in the soul, we shall not wonder that the cautions against it are so often repeated and so largely inculcated.

**(1.)** One great kindness God designed men, in giving them his law, was to preserve them from this sin, v. 24. “The reproofs of instruction are therefore *the way of life* to thee, because they are designed *to keep thee from the evil woman*, who will be certain death to thee, from being enticed by *the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman*, who pretends to love thee, but intends to ruin thee.” Those that will be wrought upon by flattery make themselves a very easy prey to the tempter; and those who would avoid that snare must take well-instructed reproofs as great kindnesses and be thankful to those that will deal faithfully with them, <sup><105></sup>Proverbs 27:5, 6.

**(2.)** The greatest kindness we can do ourselves is to keep at a distance from this sin, and to look upon it with the utmost dread and detestation (v.

25): “*Lust not after her beauty, no, not in thy heart, for, if thou dost, thou hast there already committed adultery with her. Talk not of the charms in her face, neither be thou smitten with her amorous glances; they are all snares and nets; let her not take thee with her eye-lids. Her looks are arrows and fiery darts; they wound, they kill, in another sense than what lovers mean; they call it a pleasing captivity, but it is a destroying one, it is worse than Egyptian slavery.*”

**2.** Divers arguments Solomon here urges to enforce this caution against the sin of whoredom.

**(1.)** It is a sin that impoverishes men, wastes their estates, and reduces them to beggary (v. 26): *By means of a whorish woman a man is brought to a piece of bread;* many a man has been so, who has purchased the ruin of his body and soul at the expense of his wealth. The prodigal son spent his living on harlots, so that he brought himself to be fellow-commoner with the swine. And that poverty must needs lie heavily which men bring themselves into by their own folly, <sup><8812></sup>Job 31:12.

**(2.)** It threatens death; it kills men: *The adulteress will hunt for the precious life,* perhaps designedly, as Delilah for Samson's, at least, eventually, the sin strikes at the life. Adultery was punished by the law of Moses as a capital crime. *The adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.* Every one knew this. Those therefore who, for the gratifying of a base lust, would lay themselves open to the law, could be reckoned no better than self-murderers.

**(3.)** It brings guilt upon the conscience and debauches that. He that *touches his neighbour's wife,* with an immodest touch, *cannot be innocent,* v. 29.

**[1.]** He is in imminent danger of adultery, as he that *takes fire in his bosom, or goes upon hot coals,* is in danger of being *burnt.* The way of this sin is down-hill, and those that venture upon the temptations to it hardly escape the sin itself. The fly fools away her life by playing the wanton with the flames. It is a deep pit, which it is madness to venture upon the brink of. He that keeps company with those of ill fame, that goes in with them, and touches them, cannot long preserve his innocency; he thrusts himself into temptation and so throws himself out of God's protection.

[2.] He that commits adultery is in the high road to destruction. The bold presumptuous sinner says, "I may venture upon the sin and yet escape the punishment; I shall have peace though I go on." He might as well say, I will *take fire into my bosom and not burn my clothes*, or I will *go upon hot coals and not burn my feet*. He that goes into his neighbour's wife, however he holds himself, God will not hold him guiltless. The fire of lust kindles the fire of hell.

(4.) It ruins the reputation and entails perpetual infamy upon that. It is a much more scandalous sin than stealing is, v. 30-33. Perhaps it is not so in the account of men, at least not in our day. A thief is sent to the stocks, to the gaol, to Bridewell, to the gallows, while the vile adulterer goes unpunished, nay, with many, unblemished; he dares boast of his villainies, and they are made but a jest of. But, in the account of God and his law, adultery was much the more enormous crime; and, if God is the fountain of honour, his word must be the standard of it.

[1.] As for the sin of stealing, if a man were brought to it by extreme necessity, if he stole meat for the *satisfying of his soul when he was hungry*, though that will not excuse him from guilt, yet it is such an extenuation of his crime that *men do not despise* him, do not expose him to ignominy, but pity him. Hunger will break through stone-walls, and blame will be laid upon those that brought him to poverty, or that did not relieve him. Nay, though he have not that to say in his excuse, *if he be found* stealing, and the evidence be ever so plain upon him, yet he shall only make restitution *seven-fold*. The law of Moses appointed that he who stole a sheep should restore four-fold, and an ox five-fold (<sup>4221</sup>Exodus 22:1); accordingly David adjudged, <sup>4226</sup>2 Samuel 12:6. But we may suppose in those cases concerning which the law had not made provision the judges afterwards settled the penalties in proportion to the crimes, according to the equity of the law. Now, if he that stole an ox out of a man's field must restore five-fold, it was reasonable that he that stole a man's goods out of his house should *restore seven-fold*; for there was no law to put him to death, as with us, for burglary and robbery on the highway, and of this worst kind of theft Solomon here speaks; the greatest punishment was that a man might be forced to *give all the substance of his house* to satisfy the law and his blood was not attained. But,

[2.] Committing adultery is a more heinous crime; Job calls it so, and *an iniquity to be punished by the judge*, <sup>4811</sup>Job 31:11. When Nathan would

convict David of the evil of his adultery he did it by a parable concerning the most aggravated theft, which, in David's judgment, deserved to be punished with death (<sup><005></sup>2 Samuel 12:5), and then showed him that his sin was *more exceedingly sinful* than that. *First*, It is a greater reproach to a man's reason, for he cannot excuse it, as a thief may, by saying that it was to satisfy his hunger, but must own that it was to gratify a brutish lust which would break the hedge of God's law, not for want, but for wantonness. Therefore *whoso commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding*, and deserves to be stigmatized as an arrant fool. *Secondly*, It is more severely punished by the law of God. A thief suffered only a pecuniary mulct, but the adulterer suffered death. The thief *steals to satisfy his soul*, but the adulterer *destroys his own soul*, and falls an unpitied sacrifice to the justice both of God and man. "Sinner, thou hast destroyed thyself." This may be applied to the spiritual and eternal death which is the consequence of sin; *he that does it wounds his conscience, corrupts his rational power, extinguishes all the sparks of the spiritual life, and exposes himself to the wrath of God for ever, and thus destroys his own soul.* *Thirdly*, The infamy of it is indelible, v. 33. It will be *a wound* to his good name, a *dishonour* to his family, and, though the guilt of it may be done away by repentance, the *reproach* of it never will, but will stick to his memory when he is gone. David's sin in the matter of Uriah was not only a perpetual blemish upon his own character, but gave occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme his name too.

(5.) It exposes the adulterer to the rage of the jealous husband, whose honour he puts such an affront upon, v. 34, 35. He that touches his neighbour's wife, and is familiar with her, gives him occasion for jealousy, much more he that debauches her, which, if kept ever so secret, might then be *discovered by the waters of jealousy*, <sup><042></sup>Numbers 5:12. "When discovered, thou hadst better meet a bear robbed of her whelps than the injured husband, who, in the case of adultery, will be as severe an avenger of his own honour as, in the case of manslaughter, of his brother's blood. If thou art not afraid of the wrath of God, yet be afraid of the *rage of a man*. Such jealousy is; it is *strong as death* and *cruel as the grave*. In the *day of vengeance*, when the adulterer comes to be tried for his life, the prosecutor will not spare any pains or cost in the prosecution, will not relent towards thee, as he would perhaps towards one that had robbed him. He will not accept of any commutation, any composition; *he will not regard any ransom*. Though thou offer to bribe him, and *give him many gifts* to pacify

him, he *will not rest content* with any thing less than the execution of the law. Thou must be *stoned to death*. If *a man would give all the substance of his house*, it would atone for a theft (v. 31), but not for adultery; in that case it would utterly be contemned. *Stand in awe therefore, and sin not*; expose not thyself to all this misery for a moment's sordid pleasure, which will be bitterness in the end.”