

Proverbs 23-01-11b

We continue our study now in Proverbs, we are in chapter 5, and in My New King James, this chapter is subtitled, The Peril of Adultery. The Peril of Adultery, and of course this really begins in the third verse, the lips of an immoral woman drip honey. And we've seen this all the way through the portion of Proverbs that we've covered, where you have Lady Wisdom making her appeal in the streets, and these warnings against the seductress, against the harlot, against the woman whose ways lead to death, and her house is a house of destruction and so on.

And you think, well, over and over again, this is such a prevalent theme, especially in these first nine chapters. And a lot of us can say, well, good thing that's in the past, I'm a woman and I don't have to worry about the adulteress, I'm an older man and that's no longer going to be a threat to my life, or making foolish and rash decisions because I'm immature and naive or whatever, I won't be fooled by the seducing woman. However, au contraire, that is not what is going on here at all, at least not in the majority.

There is an element of truth in it, of course, but remember how we got through Ecclesiastes, by beginning our study of that book, not by assuming that Solomon was giving trite little sayings and superficial observations about life, and many people saying, well, he's expressing human viewpoint that life is vain, live it up and then die, and whatnot. We assumed from the beginning, and found ourselves justified, that the words of wisdom contained in the book are divinely inspired and meaningful beyond the immediate and the obvious and the first generation of observation that, oh, if he's talking about a seductress, this is just a young man that needs to beware of fornication and adultery, and that's all it means. That is seldom the case in wisdom literature of any kind.

What's going on in Job has a much more meaningful and pertinent level above the superficial. Same thing in Ecclesiastes, same thing in the Song of the Shulamite or the Song of Solomon, as it's labeled in the Bible, and very much the same thing here. So let's take a look at this, and we're going to look at it as a topic.

You may want to have a piece of paper to jot references down, because I'm going to address this more categorically and not sequentially through the scripture. You could try to flip the pages of your Bible and jot in the margin, but if you've got a piece of paper, you'll thank me later. So, obviously, the idea of sexual purity and sexual sin is ever-present.

It was just as true in the earliest days of biblical history as it is today. You see the pain and the hardship and the suffering and the bad consequences when there are steps taken outside of marriage and outside of God's design of one man, one woman. You can't get very far in Genesis before you see this taking place.

When you find this idea of moral purity in Proverbs, it is addressing this literal truth, but it is also symbolic. It is also spiritual. We saw this in Malachi toward the end of our Kings and Prophets study, that the covenant of marriage spoken of for Judah was not just talking about the wife of his youth or the wives that the members of the tribe of Judah should have or even the wives of kings, but that this was representing and symbolic of the covenant they entered into with God clear back at Sinai.

And their covenant relationship with God and forsaking the wife of one's youth is put for forsaking the heritage of the nation of Israel as God's chosen people and their opportunities in that covenant. The same is true of our covenant, the covenant in Jesus' blood, symbolized as we have seen in Matthew chapter 26 and its parallels. And infidelity in the sexual realm, in the realm of marital relationship, whether it is future or present is put for faithfulness in the spiritual realm.

This is true throughout scripture. So the young man who is the addressee of much of these exhortations in the early chapters of Proverbs is encouraged to embrace wisdom personified as a woman. This should be the woman you embrace.

We saw this in chapter four, get wisdom in verse five, get understanding. Do not forsake her in verse six. She will preserve her, love her.

She will preserve you, love her and she will keep you. Wisdom is the principal thing, get wisdom. And in your getting, get understanding, exalt her and she will promote you.

She will bring you honor when you embrace her. And these words for love and embrace are common terms for physical love, marital love. This embrace, there are people that have even said that there are erotic overtones.

There is erotic language being used here. It's not erotic. These are the terms of physical love that is naturally expressed within the bounds of marriage.

All of that is true, but its truth is a springboard and an illustration of deeper spiritual truth. The wonderful marriage is when the woman that a man marries is wise and is of an understanding heart and you end up over at Proverbs 31. A good woman who can find here are her characteristics and that's the reflection back.

That's almost a bracket and a symmetry with lady wisdom at the beginning. Embrace her like you would a wife at the end. If you find a wife like this, she is a reflection of the wisdom that has been spoken of throughout the collection of Proverbs.

Now, think about this. Everybody on board so far that wisdom is being put for the ideal woman to love and embrace. In Israel, if you love and embrace a woman, you marry her.

You are married to her. Everybody with me so far? So, along the lines of Judah's sin and evil habituated behavior in Malachi, you have forsaken the wife of your youth. You have

disregarded the covenant and all of the attendant problems associated with sinning against marriage and sinning against marriage covenant vows are also in view in the spiritual realm.

Forsaking the wife of your youth, breaking that covenant, those consequences and those aftermath hardships and pain and suffering are mirrored in the spiritual realm. So, what do you think in Proverbs chapter 5 when you get to the lips of an immoral woman dripping honey, smooth as oil, but leading to all of these bad consequences? This is another iteration. We've seen it in the past.

We're going to see it again in chapter 7 of this book. Think big picture. Think spiritual issues.

Think social seduction. Think intellectual persuasion. Think spiritual distraction and diversion and being seduced away and led away by sweet words and smooth presentation.

The attraction of something that allures and entices and pulls at some of our deepest drives. The reason, morality, and immorality, marriage to a good, wise, and understanding woman, as opposed to being seduced away by the harlot, the seductress, the immoral woman, and all of the descriptions of the benefits of the one and the hazards of the others. This is taking one of the most basic and persuasive drives in our nature, which is the sex drive, and talking about spiritual things.

We have deep spiritual needs. We have inner emptiness of the heart that wants to be filled, that wants to be satisfied, that wants to be gratified. It can either be gratified and satisfied in licit ways or illicit ways, just as the basic physical drives in men and women can be satisfied either wholesomely and morally or unwholesomely and immorally.

One is put for the other. One represents the other. One communicates the other.

So, when you come to the lips of an immoral woman dripping honey, this is not just watch out that you don't commit adultery or fornication. This is watch that you are not seduced away from solid biblical faith and understanding by that which is sweet and smooth and hooks into deep-seated drives in our nature. Does this make sense? There are people who have a need for acceptance.

Maybe there is a basic insecurity, and by going to a group that purports to love me and accept me for who I am, I find that deep-seated need met. The philosophy of this group or this denomination or this approach to faith or to society and to interaction and to fellowship, I go to this group and I am accepted. I am loved.

I contribute to this group online and I am affirmed. I am agreed with. I am praised.

I am extolled. Thank you. I agree.

This is so meaningful to me. This is a drive in our nature to be accepted. Nobody likes criticism.

Nobody likes rejection. You can say, but the people that are criticizing and rejecting, they don't understand. They're not qualified to judge.

They have no business. They don't know the facts. They're at a distance and they are broad brushing me.

They're lumping me in with others and I don't even qualify for that. It still hurts. We know this.

It hurts when someone is critical. Many times that criticism is unjustified. We are being wrongly judged, wrongly accused, wrongly lumped in with others.

It still hurts and we don't like it. By the same token, we are often praised and accepted and enfolded when people maybe don't have all the facts either, but we like that. It is persuasive.

It is attractive. So the lips of an immoral woman. Notice the first description of this woman is she does not have biblical, divine standards of what is right and what is wrong.

And her lips, this is first and foremost, what she says. She can employ her lips for other purposes later, but it begins with what she says. And this is what draws us away from solid rock, biblically founded faith is a great narrative.

There, you cannot believe if you Google the word narrative and metanarrative with Bible or Christian or whatever, you will be swamped. This is all people are talking about in the modern day. This is all people are talking about politically.

It doesn't matter what the facts are. What is the narrative? What story am I telling? This is the lips of the seductress. If you like my story, you will imbibe my point of view.

You will metaphorically get in bed with people who are subverting, suborning, repurposing, and accomplishing an agenda by pulling the wool over people's eyes, making them think things are one way when they are really another way, not by somehow stacking up science and fact and truth, but with a story. Listen to the narratives that come across any form of media to which we get exposed today. It's all about the story.

So we're going to look at this. We're going to see in chapters eight and nine of Proverbs that the lady personifying wisdom and the lady personifying the seductress and the immoral woman are going to be contrasted. They are both going to invite a young man to their banquet, and he has to choose which party he is going to attend.

Proverbs is going to go on in chapter 31 especially, verses 10 through 31, to talk about

who can find a virtuous wife. Her value is more than rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her, and so on.

People have said, well, this is the description of the godly woman. Every woman should go into business for herself and have a flax business and a wool business. No, no, no, no, no.

Just tie a phylactery to your head and bind one on your hand and kiss the thing going in and out your door. If you're going to literalize this, nothing wrong with admiring a virtuous wife, but that's not the purpose of Proverbs 31. This is higher and deeper.

This is wisdom literature, and with wisdom literature, we've got to get understanding. And the virtuous woman, this is lady wisdom, and this is what she is going to bring to the spiritual life of those who embrace her. And as soon as you understand that this is about spiritual truth, you don't have to worry about, well, I'm not a young man.

I'm a girl. I'm a woman. I'm an elderly woman.

I'm a married woman. My circumstances don't in any way match this young man marching down the street. They don't have to.

It is the truth. It is the lesson of which thing are you going to be persuaded by. The young man and the seductress is just the easiest proverb, the easiest parable to tell.

I'm not a patch of dirt. I don't have rocks inside me, but I can easily understand the parable of the soils and the seed and the sower and what my response is going to be to the seed of the word, right? This is an extended parable. It is the parable of the young man being seduced.

Any of us can be seduced by honeyed words and smoothness of presentation and the allure of the story that is being told. How do you think people are persuaded to contribute to charities or to contribute to dog rescues or to contribute to any number of potentially worthy causes? But if you want to be a good steward, you can't just watch the commercial and see the little bald children in the cancer ward or the little shivering dogs that they're pulling out of some heinous environment and trying to get them adopted and fed and their wounds met and their blinded eyes fixed and so on. That's a narrative.

That's a story being told. Go research how much of every contributed dollar actually goes to the care and well-being of the pictured needy individuals. Is it 35 cents? How much of your dollar is going to go right back to pay for TV advertising to perpetuate? Not that that's a bad thing.

People need to know that there's a worthy cause, but how much of it? How much of it is going to reach your intended destination? How much of it is going to be infrastructure and salaries and buildings and air conditioning and fuel expenses and airplane flights to

speak? And where is the dollar going? If this is God's money of which we are stewards, and God says, I notice at, you know, I was reviewing the Greek for another purpose. Remember when Paul says we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ? The best Greek text is we must all stand before the judgment seat of God. That's the better text.

I think either one is equally sobering. But if you think about the judgment bar of God and you're standing there and God says, you know, I put these resources within your control and you chose to write checks off to this particular entity as a charity. What was your thinking? What was your thought process on that? Well, you know, little children, bald heads, swelled bellies, shivering dogs, one-eyed cats.

I gave you stewardship of my resources. How much spiritual thought, how much prayer did you invest? How much research did you do to see that by expending this in this direction, you're not just making yourself feel good that, well, I give to charity. Everything we do should be to the glory of God.

Is it a Christian organization? Does it minister to Christians explicitly? Is there any connection to God that this little dog is not shivering anymore? Well, a man, there's an Old Testament passage somewhere, a man has to be kind to his animal or whatever. And I was just trying to be kind to animals. It says his animal, your dog, your cat, not some pictured, you know, dog puppy mill in Pennsylvania, someplace, your dog, your animal, something you have personal cognizance over.

Are you mailing God's money off because it is the honeyed lips and the smooth oil of somebody telling a story that makes you feel good and hooks into your need to be kind? You get phone appeals to send little kids that are disadvantaged or the fallen officers, kids are going to go to a rodeo or go see a circus or whatever, used to get these by the dozens. What kids specifically? What fallen officers specifically? What circus? What rodeo? Is this going to meet a need? They've been sitting around saying, I've never seen a rodeo and my life is empty and incomplete. Is this really what they need is to go to a rodeo? You're going to spend this money on rodeo tickets or circus tickets for these kids.

How about groceries? How about clothing? How about, you know, private school tuition so they don't get put into the, you know, psychological pressure of public school and get subverted into, you know, all kinds of heinous thinking. What are their actual needs? How much of this money actually goes to that? How much of it pays you to call me on the phone? Oh, but it makes me feel good. What does the seductress do to the young man that she pulls aside and starts whispering in his ear and kissing his cheek and, you know, caressing him in various ways? He feels good in her presence.

Well, I'll go along with you because you make me feel good. That's what this is talking about. Forget the young man, forget the seductress, think me, myself, and I. What does the world say to me? How is it caressing and whispering and seducing me away from

solid, biblical, Christian, God-fearing, God-honoring, God-glorifying thinking with what I say, what I do, how I invest my time and my stewardship of resources that God has given me? Am I being persuaded and distracted and seduced into doing things I should not do, saying what I shouldn't say, supporting what I shouldn't support, getting distracted because it makes me feel good? Seduction is all about feeling good.

Oh man, this feels good. This feels better the further I go and the longer it lasts, the better I feel. What do you think seduction is? Feel good.

So we can all ask ourselves in whatever stage of life, in whatever personal circumstances, to what extent do I think and apply wisdom and understanding to my decisions, my path, the step that I take? Am I withdrawing my foot from evil? Or I say, wow, that felt good. These must be new shoes. That step felt great.

Oh, wow, this is a really smooth road. It's downhill from here. And it literally is.

It ends in Sheol because it's an easy path. Feels good. Got my soft, comfy shoes on.

These are special shoes. They've got super soft insoles, and they've got gel, and they've got extra thickness. And oh, these feel great.

This path feels great. I'm feeling good. Feelings are often used to lead us astray.

When they are initiating and we are responding, instead of wisdom and understanding, keeping us and guarding us and ensuring that we are on the right path, getting wisdom and getting understanding there's no feelings attached to that in scripture. It's thinking. It's recognizing truth, recognizing covenant responsibility to God.

He is the father. I am the son. I should listen to his counsel.

I should follow his exhortation. I should dedicate myself. I should spend time and effort as I would something that affects my very life, my medication, my therapy, my driving habits.

Am I driving crazy and endangering myself and others? Or am I careful because I know that life is literally on the line, hurtling down roads at insane amounts of speed? I pay attention to that. Why would I not pay attention in the spiritual realm? So what we are going to see is that this, first of all, begins at home. This is a father exhorting his son or his children, my sons, my son, my son.

This is love and it is first person love. You are my child. You are my son.

Listen to me because of our relationship. Listen to me because you are my child and because I am your father. What is the value of God's love? What is the value in our minds of our relationship to God? Do we value it enough to prioritize what God says and what God asks of us or is it an appendage? Is it a casual fact? There are people that

aren't close with their parents.

Maybe their parents were absent, away making money, away doing other things, a single parent home, parents working, raised in daycare, raised in lessons and coaches and teams and other environments. That's not the biblical picture. The biblical picture is closeness and a home environment where there is a father and a mother.

Notice the mother begins with the instruction and she does the nurturing and the early shaping and investment and then it shifts to the father. Here is the mother. Here is the father.

The mother gets it started. She does the nursing. She does the diapering.

She does the stuff while the child is in need of that kind of nurture and when a certain level of maturity is reached, the father starts getting in there and providing his wisdom and his experience. That's why the bulk of these exhortations are for the one who is mature enough to understand and digest what the father is providing. But we're going to see that the wrong choice, pursuing the wrong woman can lead to destruction.

Flip the page over here to Proverbs chapter seven. This is representative. We're going to be skipping around in chapters five, six, and seven here.

My son, keep my words, treasure my commands within you. Look at verse six. At the window of my house, I looked through my lattice and saw among the simple, among the youths, a young man devoid of understanding.

Passing along the street near her corner, he took the path to her house in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night, absence of light. There was a woman who met him with the attire of a harlot, crafty heart, loud and rebellious, feet would not stay at home. Outside at times in the open square, lurking at every corner, she caught him and kissed him with an impudent face.

She said to him, I have peace offerings with me today. I have paid my vows. I've done my ritual religious observance.

I'm not a bad woman. I made vows and kept them. I took peace offerings down.

I'm nominally Israelite, nominally observant. So I came out to meet you diligently to seek your face. I have found you.

I've spread my bed with tapestry, colored coverings of Egyptian linen. And all the from verse six through verse 23, you have the vivid description of the seduction of a young man, how it is done. And this metaphor, this parable describes how believers are subverted, Old Testament and new, great appearances, wonderful dust jackets on books that present viewpoints.

Oh, there's a blurb. This is approved by experts. Scholars love this.

It's popular. It's a best seller. Spread my bed with a tapestry.

Isn't that beautiful? Look at the covers. They're gorgeous. This is an attractive bed.

I bet it feels good to lie in it also. And it reads like a lion stalking a weak or young gazelle at the back of the herd. It's largely naivete, lack of experience and failure to heed the exhortation of the mother and the father that said, when you see this woman, you need to stop right there, turn around and get away, flee youthful lusts, failure to heed instruction.

Instruction makes up for lack of experience, instruction, wisdom, and understanding make up for lack of experience, lack of perception, lack of willpower to resist, lack of knowledge enough to identify the specifics of this kind of seduction. I see it for what it is. I shouldn't be talking to this woman and certainly not this kind of woman.

Why isn't she at home? Why is she not doing what she is supposed to do? She is obviously immoral. She is obviously deceptive. That should be enough to turn and get away from her seductive words, her seductive lips, her seductive charms, her seductive caresses.

Nip it, nip it, nip it in the bud. This is part of the exhortation that the mother and the father have given. This young man says, well, maybe mom and dad aren't right.

There might be something worthwhile in this. Maybe I can lead her to the Lord. He doesn't fully understand what is happening or what is about to happen.

He walks right into temptation because he is near her corner. It's her corner. It's a known place where she hangs out.

He has been told in chapter five, verse eight, to not go near that corner. Remember five, eight, remove your way far from her and do not go near the door of her house. Well, he has disregarded that instruction.

Probably curiosity. Perhaps he overestimates his wisdom and his impervious ability to stave off this seduction and this temptation. Perhaps he is not where he should be and he's not doing what he should be doing.

There is a vacuum there. Remember David in second Samuel chapter 11, when Kings go out to battle, David wasn't at the battle. When he should have been out on the battlefield with Uriah, he was back where he could see Uriah's wife bathing.

Review second Samuel chapter 11. If you hang out where you shouldn't hang out and you're not doing what you should be doing, there is a vacuum into which places you shouldn't be and things you shouldn't be doing will be drawn. The darkness is a time of

evil and danger.

Chapter four, verse 19, the way of the wicked is like darkness. They do not know at what they stumble. You can trip over so many things when it is dark.

Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Your word I have hid in my heart that I might not sin. Review, retain, rehearse, prioritize, think about the word.

This is the light that shines on our path and prevents this from ever happening. You look at verses 10 through 20 and you can see the tactics of this perverse seductress. She has an alluring appearance.

Verse 10, she has the attire of a harlot. Harlots, this is revealing more than ought to be revealed, tantalizing in illicit ways. Chapter six, verse 25, do not lust after her beauty in your heart.

Do not let her allure you with her eyelids. She's got mannerisms that distract you from thinking and get you into those drives. So her clothing is excessively revealing.

Her eyelids are fluttering to capture his attention. It reminds you of, if you remember in the Pilgrim's Progress, there is a description of the town that is being attacked and it has different gates and John Bunyan labels them as the ear gate, the eye gate, the nose gate and they are vulnerabilities. They are openings in the wall that can be exploited and so music can be used.

Did you ever notice how every commercial has music? There's music in every single commercial. Music? Is there car music? Is there toaster music? Is there toaster waffle music? But there's some sort of a tune, there's a jingle and it wants you to adopt a mood. When you see scenes that have nothing to do with the product, people running on the beach and you just say, what has this got to do with a car? People running on the beach, what's it got to do with a car? They are trying to get past your thought mode and into your emotion mode and your vulnerability mode.

Oh, I would love to be a part of a world that sounds like this, looks like this, feels like this, makes me feel like these scenes and sounds make me feel. If I get this car, I'll be part of that world and it is an allure that is below the level of consciousness. It is a subconscious attraction and it's very intentional.

They use marketing, they use all kinds of tests to see what will move people other than reason and logic and what makes sense. So John Bunyan has the Holy War and the city of Mansoul is attacked at these various gates, ear gate, eye gate, nose gate. The adulteress attacks these various gates.

So she uses her alluring appearance, she uses smooth words, flattery and spiritual substitutes and spiritual counterfeits do the same thing. They want to flatter you. God

accepts you and loves you just as you are.

Sin is not a problem. Read, if you dare, some of the current appeals in progressive and deconstructive Christianity. Atonement, the covenant in blood is absolutely lacking.

God loves you just as you are. Jesus loved the poor. He loved the harlots.

He loved the tax collectors. And there is no hint that Jesus loved the ones who were approaching him, looking for change, looking for cleansing, looking for healing. He didn't love the diseased.

The disease came to him and he healed them. He didn't love prostitutes. Young ladies who were involved in prostitution came to him and they were freed.

I have come to proclaim release to the captives. You don't have to be a harlot anymore. You don't have to be a tax collector anymore.

You don't have to be trapped in the sin and evil that you are coming to me to escape. That is lacking. They say not only does God and Jesus love people right where they are, just as they are, but we should too.

So we should accept people without any notion that lifestyle choices should be abandoned and that wrong choices and sinful and evil behaviors should be something to escape and to move into the light out of darkness. Your darkness is fine. This is the message.

So these are promises of gratification. You will find yourself happy. You will find yourself accepted.

You will find yourself enjoying what we offer. This is the allure of the world. This is the allure of the flesh.

This is the world of the devil. The allure that he presents back to Eve in the garden, the serpent in the tree. When Eve saw that the fruit was good to look upon and desirable to make one wise, the serpent sold her beauty and potential benefit in the fruit that God forbade.

God said, don't eat it. Serpent convinces her that it's pretty and desirable to make me feel even better about myself, to advance me, to make me even more complete than I am. She's perfect from the God.

And this is going to make her better. Can't be thinking divine truth and swallow that lie. But she was deceived.

Old Testament and new. She was deceived. Be not deceived.

Let no man deceive you. How many times have we seen it in the gospel of Matthew? How many times do you see it in Paul? Be not deceived. God is not mocked.

This is what the seductress does. It is deceptive. It is alluring.

It seems like it's going to be so much fun, so gratifying, so pleasant, but it leads to death. It leads to destruction. There is no coming back from her house we saw in the preceding chapter.

Well, much more about this and the universal applicability of this. Certainly young men can benefit by reading and absorbing this, but every single one of us needs to think about this. This is wisdom with understanding.

And the understanding is I need this. You need this. We all need this.

We need it now. We need it every day. And we're going to take our time and be sure we understand this content coming up in chapters 5 through 9. It's so practical, so motivating, and so beneficial.

Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for the preservation. Thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit to help us see its truth and find its application in our daily walk.

We pray that your Spirit will convict us, show us where we have been deceived, where we are deceiving ourselves, and allow the light of your word to shine on our paths so that we can be clearly on the narrow road that leads through the straight gate to life. And in so doing, vindicate the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf, exploit the wonderful resources he has provided to us, and glorify him and reflect your own glory both now and in the ages to come. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.