

Proverbs 23-01-18b

Let's pick up our study now in the parable of the crafty harlot, keeping in mind that these avenues of temptation, these techniques for seduction are in use today by the forces of darkness against every single one of us. So you look at the first point, it is a lot of talking. People want to give a narrative, they want to give arguments, they want to stimulate emotional responses, but the attack is largely verbal.

We don't have much by way of physical attack or jackbooted stormtroopers coming down our streets and making us do things we don't wanna do. It is clever, it is advertising, it is techniques that employ sending messages, so flattering words. And it is an attack that is local, it's in our homes, it comes into our living rooms, it comes over our phones and our computers and our communication devices, and you never know where it is going to be.

Sometimes it is personal and domestic, other times it is public and it is in the square, you never know where this gal is gonna be. Sometimes you can look out the window and see her, other times it's gonna be verse 12 where she's outside at times in the open square, it's unpredictable, you never know where this is going to come from, there's no safe location. And thirdly, she is lying in wait for the unwary, the simple, the youthful, the empty hearted.

And we see this in chapter six, verse 32, whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding and he who does so destroys his soul. If you go down this road, the end is destruction, the end is death, this is no small thing, to be seduced away from the right path is operational death, spiritual death. It doesn't mean that we've lost our salvation, it means that the plant that represents growth and production is gone, it dies, the seed is in shallow soil, it doesn't survive pressure, it doesn't persist, it doesn't endure.

So the fourth point is we have a choice when these alternate narratives, when these different ideas, when these persuasive and seductive suggestions are made, we have a choice. We see the choice to be seduced and go down the crafty harlot's road in chapter nine, verses 13 and following, the foolish, clamorous woman, we're gonna see this loud and clamorous idea coming up here, whoever is simple, let her turn in here, him turn in here, as for him who lacks understanding, she says, stolen water is sweet and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. So there is a choice, that's point four.

Verse eight, going down her path with her is a choice and our chooser is given two choices. We can listen to wisdom or we can listen to the ways of the world. This brings us to point number five, this is verse nine.

In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark of night. This is the original contrast between darkness and light. The opportunity is in darkness.

If we walk in the light, 1 John 1, 7, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with God and God has fellowship with us and the blood of Jesus Christ, his son, keeps on cleansing us from sin. Walk in the light. Now, this sounds like an abstraction.

If we walk in the light as he is in the light, what does it mean to walk in the light? We need to remove our foot from the path that leads to darkness. If there are places, if there are activities, if there are nooks and crannies on the internet, if there is literature, if there are movies, if there are individuals with whom we have concourse, with whom we have conversation and it drags us into the darkness, that's got to be cut off. That's the eye that offends.

That is the hand that offends. Cut it off. It's better to get through life with one eye or one hand than to preserve these and lose reward and inheritance in the future.

Darkness and light. This is a fascinating contrast. Turn over to the New Testament, to John 3, verse 19.

Do you remember John 3, 16? I know you do. This is John 3, 19. This is the condemnation that the light has come into the world and men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

We choose darkness. We choose light. Everyone practicing evil hates the light, verse 20, and does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed.

But he who does the truth, who practices the truth, comes to the light so that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God. If we find ourselves having to be deceptive, having to not talk about certain things, not let certain things be seen or be known, John 3, 19, 20, and 21 is our guide. We are not of the light.

We are not of the day, if this is the case. I'm at point five, which is verse nine. This crafty harlot is opportunistic.

She works in the darkness. She takes advantage of darkness. And those who walk in the darkness.

You can look at John 8 and verse 12. If you continue in the New Testament. John 8, 12, Jesus is talking once again about the light.

I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life. Light and darkness.

Turn back to the Old Testament to Jeremiah chapter nine. Oh, that my head were waters, my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people. Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging place for wayfaring men, that I might leave my people and go from them, for they are all adulterers and assembly of

treacherous men.

This harlot is an adulteress. Like their bow, they have bent their tongues for lies, the deceitfulness of her appeal. You enter into it and you become a part of it.

They are not valiant for the truth on the earth. They proceed from evil to evil and they do not know me, says the Lord. Why is Jeremiah known as the weeping prophet? Why is his other book called Lamentations? This is the outcome of those who turn away at God's reproof, who turn away from God's law and God's light.

Verse four, everyone take heed to his neighbor. Do not trust any brother. Every brother will utterly supplant.

Every neighbor will walk with slanderers. Everyone will deceive his neighbor and will not speak the truth. They have taught their tongue to speak lies.

They weary themselves to commit iniquity. They wear themselves out doing iniquity. Is this not a valid description of what we see around us today? Your habitation is in the midst of deceit.

Through deceit, they refuse to know me, says the Lord. Therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, behold, I will refine them and try them. For how shall I deal with the daughter of my people? Their tongue is an arrow shot out.

It speaks deceit. One speaks peaceably to his neighbor with his mouth, but in his heart, he lies in wait. This is what the harlot is doing.

She is lying in wait on that dark road. Shall I not punish them for these things, says the Lord? Shall I not avenge myself on such a nation as this? I will take up a weeping and wailing for the mountains and the habitations of the wilderness, a lamentation, because they are burned up so that no one can pass through them, nor can men hear the voice of cattle, the noise of cattle. Both the birds of the heavens and the beasts have fled.

They are gone. I will make Jerusalem a heap of ruins and a den of jackals. I will make the cities of Judah desolate without an inhabitant.

Who is the wise man who may understand this? Who is he to whom the mouth of the Lord has spoken that he may declare it? Why does the land perish and burn up like a wilderness so that no one can pass through? The Lord said, because they have forsaken my law, which I set before them, they have not obeyed my voice nor walked according to it. Remember, as goes the nation in the Old Testament, so goes the individual believer in the new, the nation of Israel, compared to the individual Christian. Who is the wise man who is understanding? Look at our nation today.

We have a nation of individuals who in mass and in the majority and as a trend and a

pattern have followed this very same path. They have forsaken my law, which I set before them. They have not obeyed my voice nor walked according to it.

Verse 14, it says, Jeremiah 9, 14. They have walked according to the imagination of their own heart and after the bales, which their fathers taught them. Therefore, thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, behold, I will feed them this people with wormwood and give them water of gall to drink.

I will scatter them also among the Gentiles whom neither they nor their fathers have known. And I will send a sword after them until I have consumed them. And you can read on in that chapter.

This is the fate of those who do not listen to the appeal of wisdom, who fall for the seductive flattering words of this crafty harlot. Well, opportunity in the darkness. Look at chapter eight of Proverbs by way of contrast.

What does wisdom do? What is the alternative? What is the choice we have here? Look at chapter eight, beginning at verse 23. Wisdom says in verse 22, the Lord possessed me at the beginning of his way, before his works of old. We're going all the way back to Genesis chapter one here.

Wisdom, I have been established from everlasting from the beginning before there was ever an earth. When there were no depths, I was brought forth. When there were no fountains abounding with water, before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I was brought forth.

While as yet he had not made the earth or the fields or the primeval dust of the world, when he prepared the heavens, I was there. This is wisdom without saying so, talking about herself as light. When he prepared the heavens, I was there.

This is when all the stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy at the beginning, the creation of the heavens and the earth. The heavens came into being and along with them came light. When he prepared the heavens, I was there.

When he drew a circle on the face of the deep, when he established the clouds above, when he strengthened the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit so that the waters would not transgress his command, what came first? What is the first let there be in Genesis one? Let there be light. Wisdom and light are commingled here. One represents the other.

The waters would not transgress his command. He marked out the foundations of the earth. 830 of Proverbs.

Then I was beside him as a master craftsman and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him, rejoicing in his inhabited world. And my delight was with the sons of men.

Notice daily, this is the daytime.

These things are accomplished in the daylight. Therefore, listen to me, my children. Blessed are those who keep my ways.

Hear instruction and be wise. Do not disdain it. Blessed is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.

Whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord. He who sins against me wrongs his own soul. All those who hate me love death.

Light and darkness, life and death, creation and destruction are on the line for every single one of us. Are we going to listen to the word? Are we going to respond to the conviction of the Holy Spirit? Turn ye at my reproof. Why will you die? Oh, house of Israel, the people of God, life and death.

So the appeal is to be drawn by our nature, by the craftiness of the world and the devil, as well as the flesh into darkness, into evil deeds. That is verse nine, that is point five. Opportunity to be drawn into the darkness, down a dark path.

Number six, verse 10. There in the twilight, in the evening, in the black and the dark night. How many ways does it have to tell us in verse nine that this is darkness? Twilight, evening, black, dark night.

There a woman met him with the attire of a harlot and a crafty heart. This is the clothing of a harlot. What do you think the clothing of a harlot is like? Is it modest? Is it chaste? Is it unrevealing and not, not appealing to prior interest? Or is it low cut? Does it reveal the sexy ankles that they used to seduce with in ancient Near Eastern days? The attire of a harlot is going to accentuate the female form.

It is going to be revealing. It is, as she walks, her bare leg is going to show. This does not appeal to thought.

It appeals to instinct. The attire of a harlot and a crafty heart. Crafty, once again, this is the heart looking out for itself.

Looking out for itself. You see this in the Hebrew here. The crafty heart translates a word where this individual young man has an empty heart.

She has a crafty heart. And this is a word that means to watch or guard or keep. It is used of God keeping loving kindness.

Remember Exodus 34, God who keeps loving kindness and mercy for thousands, who keeps, who guards, who treasures. But this is used of this woman's heart because this is self-preservation. She is looking out for number one.

She is watching out for herself. Her heart is only interested in its own grace. Gratification, its own goals and its own objectives.

So this is a guarded heart. She doesn't let out what she's really thinking. She puts on a show for this individual.

So she is dressed to be interesting to this young man, but in her heart, she is guarding her own interests and her own goals. Outward appearance and inner heart are radically different. She says, I'm here for you, young man.

Look at the opportunity you have here to gratify yourself and to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. But her heart has an entirely different mission. She's not plying her wares to no purpose.

There is profit and there is a self-interest that is in view. That is, verse 10, that is our point six. Watching out for itself.

Verse 11, she is loud and rebellious. Her feet will not stay at home. Loud and clamorous.

Look at chapter nine, verse 13. A foolish woman is loud. She is impudent.

She speaks out of turn. Have you seen people on social media? Have you seen people on the news who something happens and they are in your face about it? They are arrogant and impudent. They are ready to shout down other people with their view.

And it is very unseemly and unbecoming for anyone to do this. But women who ought to be modest, who are free to express their opinions and express views supported by evidence and truth is fine. But to try to win your point by impudent, clamorous shouting is not the way.

This is not the mark of someone who is speaking divine truth, who is walking in the light. Anytime you see someone shouting down the opposition with ad hominem attack, with accusation, with impudent, arrogant, demeaning, divisive, dismissive speech, that's what this means. A foolish woman is clamorous.

She is simple and knows nothing. And she's simple by choice. The wisdom of God does not fill her heart.

So she is loud and she is rebellious in verse 11 of chapter seven. Rebellious, not conforming to propriety. Not conforming to convention.

I don't have to dress like a woman. I don't have to be modest or chaste as a woman should be. I don't have to pay attention to the biblical pattern of marriage and seeking to run a good home and be a good wife.

That is no, no, no for me. Rebellious. Her feet will not stay at home.

Now this, in this day and age, if you make this point from the Bible, you can get canceled. You can be taken off of your internet service because you're saying from the word of God that a woman's place is in the home. I'm sorry, but this is what the Bible says.

The characteristic of this woman is that her feet will not stay at home. Look at 1 Timothy chapter five. Younger widows are introduced in verse 11, grow wanton against Christ.

They have condemnation because they have cast off their first faith and they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house. They do not stay at home. They wander from house to house.

They're not only idle, meaning they don't take care of the duties involved in maintaining a household and training and raising children. They wander from house to house, not only idle, also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not. Notice how departing from the biblical pattern, you end up perpetrating verbal sins, talking when you shouldn't talk about things that shouldn't be talked about, spreading gossip, spreading opinions that are not a part of a Christlike attitude or a biblical view.

They have first begun in verse 11 to grow wanton against Christ. They want to marry, but in other words, they want to be supported, but they don't want to fulfill their part of marriage. They want to marry, and then they want to wander from house to house and be idle and gossip, a busybody.

Therefore, Paul says, I desire that the younger marry, bear children, manage their house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully. The proper marriage involves bearing children, managing the house, and giving no opportunity for reproach through gossip and slander and idleness and wandering away from one's responsibilities. So getting caught up in the affairs of this life, being entangled and wanting to talk about them and gossip about them and depart from one's assigned responsibilities, this is bad for anyone, man or woman.

Any of these gendered exhortations ought to be taken in principle to refer to all of us. If your assignment is to run a orderly household and to raise children faithfully, to depart from it is a bad thing. If your assignment is to earn bread by the sweat of your brow, to be informed and be a good steward and to rule well your household, then do that.

Whatever it is, whatever we do should be done heartily as unto the Lord, not becoming wanton against Christ, man or woman. So this idea of not staying at home, not tending to one's assigned responsibilities, whatever they may be. And one of the things to watch for in terms of those who are attempting to lead us astray in society, in politics, in religious realms, in spiritual realms, are they fulfilling their own responsibilities or are they telling you what ought to be done and they themselves are a shambles? An orderly, productive and godly personal life is required in those who are called by God to

communicate.

If a man cannot rule well his own household, he shouldn't be tapped to rule the house of God. This is part of the qualification for leadership and it is true for every single believer. A mother can't train her children if she herself is not tending to her God-given responsibilities.

Anyone, whether it is an employer, an employee, a husband, a wife, a parent, a child, operating within families, within the larger family of the church, the brothers and sisters that form part of the church, we have to first and foremost have an orderly personal life and a clear understanding of what our assignment is, what our calling is, what our opportunities are and to be faithfully fulfilling those before we have any business talking to others, seeking to provide guidance or counsel or exert authority over others, we have to first be squared away. And people that have disorder in their own household are not to be looked at or looked to for guidance. You know, why would you use a mechanic whose own car doesn't run? Why would you go to a dentist whose own teeth and whose family's teeth are a shambles? You know, someone needs to demonstrate that they understand the first principles of the doctrines of Christ and walking by faith and being faithful, being prayerful, asking and seeking and knocking.

These have to be characteristics of anyone. So this crafty harlot isn't doing what a woman should do and a young man with any sense isn't gonna listen to a woman who is not in the right place at the right time doing what a woman ought to be doing. If it's dark, where should she be? She should be at home with a husband looking after her children.

It's nine o'clock. Do you know where your children are? They used to say this on TV. And there are responsibilities for women, none of whom ought to be wandering the streets at night.

You're asking for trouble. Whether you're a daughter in a home or whether you're a wife in a home, you should be at home after dark. She's in the streets.

So you know that she is up to no good. This by way of principle should tell us if we are going to look to book authors or talking heads on television or people who put videos out that purport to be communicating spiritual truth and to be telling us what is right, look to their personal life. And if it's a shambles, beware.

This lady's personal life is a shambles. Wisdom's personal life is not a shambles. And you find this at the end of Proverbs in the description of the worthy woman, the worthy wife.

So that is verse 11. She is loud and rebellious instead of modest and chaste. She is away from home instead of at home.

Verse 12, sometimes she's outside. Sometimes she's in the open square. Sometimes

she's in a dark street.

One thing you never find her is at home doing what she's supposed to do. She's anywhere but where she should be. Kind of reminds you of Solomon in the Song of the Shulamite.

He's pretty much anywhere except with her. She looks for him at night and he's not there. She looks for him at the feast and he's at the other end of the table.

He's saying things that sound right, but he's not doing what he ought to do as her husband. And this woman is not doing what she should do as a woman. So she is at an unpredictable location.

And you can see this back in verse eight where she's got a corner and a path to her house. And then at other times she's out here lurking at every corner. This word lurking in verse 12 means to set an ambush.

To set an ambush. This is in Joshua chapter eight. We don't have time to turn to it, but when you read Joshua eight, it's all about setting an ambush, luring the people out and then ambushing them, flanking them, catching them and cutting off their lines of support and supply and retreat.

Ambush. She is ambushing at every corner. So verse 13, that's verse 12, which is 0.8. Unpredictable ambush.

How can we avoid being ambushed and being attacked from unpredictable angles? The light of the word of God needs to be shining on our path so that we can see the dangers. We are forewarned and forearmed. Our ninth point is verse 13.

She catches him and kisses him with a brazen, impudent face. She speaks. This brazen face, you find this in Judges chapter six and verse two.

When the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, the Lord delivered them into the hands of the Midianites for seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel. Because of the Midianites, the children of Israel had to make for themselves dens and caves and strongholds, which are in the mountains.

Where it says in six two, that the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel. That's our word. And they couldn't travel their roads.

They couldn't stay in their homes because the hand of Midian kept overcoming them. So this impudent face, this is an overcoming face. This is a face that won't take no for an answer.

It's a face that conquers and overcomes. She gets in his face and speaks and he can't ignore her. He can't get away from her.

He is conquered by her the way the Midianites conquered Israel in Judges six. That's the idea. She catches him and kisses him.

This is more of this completely improper behavior. What did Joseph do when this happened to him? When the wife of Potiphar came after him? This is Genesis 39, verse seven. When she laid hold of him and tried to kiss him and tried to seduce him, what did Joseph do? He ran away and what she had seized, he just left behind.

Reminds you of the young man in the garden who is gonna run away and leave his garment behind because he's fleeing. This is what this young man ought to do when he is seized and kissed on a dark street, but he doesn't, he goes with her. He is conquered, he is prevailed upon by her.

This seizing him, this is the same word that is used when the angels had to take hold of Lot and take hold of his wife in Genesis 19, verse 16. They had to forcibly grab them by the arms. Lot refused to leave, but he is forcibly dragged out of the city as is Mrs. Lot by the angels.

That's what she does. She's just not taking no for an answer. Who do you think is stronger? A virile young man or this crafty harlot? He's stronger, but he lets himself be dragged away.

He lets himself be kissed. He lets himself be seduced. It's a choice.

Our 10th point is verse 14 here of Proverbs 7. She says, I have peace offerings with me. Today I have paid my vows. She legitimizes herself with righteous claims.

Proverbs 15 and verse eight. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord. Just because even if she had done this and it's doubtful that she did, but even if she had offered a peace offering and paid her vows, it's a sacrifice of the wicked and God does not accept it.

And we should know the difference. Proverbs chapter 17 and verse one, same thing. Better is a dry morsel with quietness than a house full of sacrifice with strife.

Sacrificial meals. Peace offerings were a meal that were to be eaten in the presence of God. She alludes to this and she's up to no good.

Proverbs 21, 27. 21, 27. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination.

How much more when he brings it with wicked intent? The sacrifice itself is an abomination and the intent of the heart that motivated it is that much more. Second Samuel chapter 15, verses six through nine. You can put with this.

John chapter 18 and verse 28. I'll just read you John 18, 28. They led Jesus from Caiaphas to the praetorium and it was early morning, but they themselves did not go into the

praetorium lest they should be defiled so that they might eat the Passover.

These people ensuring that Jesus is arrested, tried and crucified are very attentive to their sacrifice and their feast. They don't want to be defiled. They don't want to enter the court of a Gentile.

They don't want to enter the house of a Gentile lest they be defiled. What is going on in their heart? Who do you, what do you think is more defiling? That they should set foot in the praetorium or that they should betray Jesus into the hands of men? What is going on in the heart? This is what we need to watch for. Legitimizing itself with righteous claims.

Verse 15 of Proverbs 7, flattering the victim by telling them how desirable they are. I came out to meet you diligently to seek your face. I have found you.

Look at all those second person singular pronouns. You're the one, you're desirable. I just can't do without you, can't live without you.

Those who cater to self-importance are dangerous when they make you feel like it's all about me. This is what a lot of counseling does. This is what have people that go for therapy.

They're celebrities that have a coterie of people about them that just cater to their every whim and make them feel self-important all the time. This appeal to self-importance is a dangerous ploy. Wisdom never caters to our self-importance.

It shows us who we really are in the plan and purpose of God. And what grace it is that we have been incorporated into God's plan and purpose. By grace, you are saved.

It is by grace that we are sustained. It is by grace that we have life and a future, not, oh, you're so important. So being flattered as desirable and catering to self-importance.

And then finally in verses 16 and 17, our 12th point, she uses, she says, I've spread my bed with tapestry, colored coverings of Egyptian linen. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Just remember, and this is fascinating to look up.

I don't have time to take you there, but Exodus chapter 30, verse 23 and following, there is a perfume made of cinnamon and myrrh and other rare and precious liquids and spices that was to be used exclusively in God's tabernacle. In fact, it was a death penalty offense for someone to mix this kind of perfume and then use it for their personal gratification. Read Exodus 30, 23 and following.

Perfume was to be a reminder of God's presence, of approaching God and such perfume, especially the cinnamon. Cinnamon is a huge part of this. And yet she is using a very similar perfume to perfume her bed.

Well, this is just like worship of God, but you're gonna be worshiping me instead and

worshiping your own pleasure. And the colors, these Egyptian linens, if you look at Exodus 26, one and following, the construction of the tabernacle was to be done with colored linens. So this is taking the place of worship of God, the colors, the perfumes, the experience.

And you think about the kind of experiential efforts that people are making today for worship to become like the world. When God said, especially with regard to the perfume, it is to be unique. Nothing should be like it.

This is why I think music should be separate and distinct in the church. The atmosphere, the environment, the nature of it, whether it is colored linen, whether it is perfume, these are aesthetics and the aesthetics of worship ought to be unique, separate and apart. But the world uses these ploys and the worldly church uses these ploys and corrupts and intermingles them to seduce believers away from wisdom and understanding.

It is a substitute. It is the bed of the crafty harlot. It is not the life and the light and the benefit of wisdom.

Well, I didn't cover my outline. We ran a little long, but think about these. This is applicable to each and every one of us.

This is a warning. This description of this crafty harlot applies to our social life, to our conversations, to our interactions with the world and with one another. Be watchful.

Am I in the light or am I in the dark? Is someone appealing to my sense of self-importance? Is someone seducing me with their attractiveness, with their seductiveness? Are they appealing to avenues of gratification that have nothing to do with the way of wisdom? Is this a dark corner, or is this everything that you find in chapter eight, the excellence of wisdom? Look at the contrast. This is not juxtaposed by accident. And to rehearse and review the characteristics of wisdom and understanding is to fortify and protect our souls from being unwary and simple and being taken in and led down a road from which there is no return.

So critical to each and every one of us. Father, thank you for the truth of your word. Thank you for this wonderful passage of scripture that instructs us, rebukes us, corrects us, and leads us in the way of righteousness so that we can be equipped for every good work.

We can fulfill your purposes for our existence in each of our relationships, each of our social contexts, each of our family connections. We pray that the Holy Spirit will minister these truths to us. Help us to see clearly the path that leads through the straight gate to life and that accomplishes your purpose in our lives.

We ask it in Jesus' name, amen.

