

Proverbs 23-01-25b

We resume our study now. We're looking at the parable of the crafty harlot and the contrast with Lady Wisdom that you find in Proverbs 7, 8, and 9. This first point we have dwelled on a bit because it is a summary of all of those which follow. This immoral seductress who flatters with her words and the danger of words.

Words can unite or words can divide. A message can reflect truth or a message can deceive and lead us into catastrophic error. So listening to words requires evaluation and judgment.

So we've seen in 1 Corinthians 1 the divisive nature of the words that are being bandied about in the Corinthian church and the unifying words that Paul writes and sends to them as an encouragement and an exhortation to resolve the disunity, the disharmony, the factionalism, the animosity that cannot be a part of a healthy Christian fellowship. It is Satan's tool. You notice that the harlot doesn't find this young man walking down the street with his parents.

He's by himself. The snake in the tree didn't talk to Adam and Eve, waited until Eve was by herself. Fellowship is important.

Unity is important. Sticking together is important. Find the parts of the truth that we can all agree on, unify on it, hold hands, shake hands, maintain fellowship on that ground.

So important. So we have to beware of those who speak divisively. This is the first point of application.

There are three points of application on this first point. One is beware of those who speak divisively and don't be one. Don't bring up divisive topics around fellow believers.

Steer clear. It's not helpful. If you think they're blind, the last thing you ought to think is that you can somehow cure that.

Can't do it. Stay away from it. Number two, the second point of application on the flattering with words.

These words are used to push an agenda. They're not just wrong. There is an agenda behind it.

Turn with me to 2 Timothy chapter three. The Apostle Paul, so steeped in Old Testament truth, has the answers. He teaches the truth that will protect us from this immoral seductress.

So he's talking to Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter four. I'm sorry, 2 Timothy chapter three. Know this, in the last days, perilous times will come.

Is it perilous for the young man to walk alone in the dark streets where he can be waylaid by this woman? Yes. He is naive. He's not equipped.

When we are fully equipped, we can walk through the valley of the shadow and not fear evil, not be taken in by evil. Not so this young man. Perilous times will come.

Three, two of 2 Timothy. Men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. What is this immoral seductress leading with? What is the crafty harlot putting forward? Loving pleasure.

She's describing the potential for pleasure. Having a form of godliness, an appearance of godliness, but denying its power from such people turn away. You want somebody to divide from? Post this list.

Look at this list. If somebody partakes of these characteristics, from such people turn away. Why? For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts.

Notice the figure is reversed here. Instead of a young man being seduced by a harlot, these are fast-talking men who creep into women's houses. By the way, if it's the woman's house, two things are wrong, right? First of all, it's her husband's house.

And second of all, why is this guy getting in? If the husband's not home, this guy shouldn't be let through the door. But you start with bad decisions that in and of themselves don't seem harmful, don't seem deadly, don't seem that they will lead to a fatal conclusion. You've got to stop this stuff where it starts.

And lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, this is a recipe for putting yourself in the power of darkness. Loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts. What should be leading us? How should we as believers be led? Be not drunk with wine wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit.

Walk by means of the Spirit. Keep in step with the Spirit. Not led away by our own desires.

You can put with that Romans 7. With my mind, I serve the law of God, but my flesh is constantly warring against my mind, trying to lead me down a bad road. Who will deliver me from the body of this death? Well, we have been delivered because Paul is describing what it was like to live without the presence and power of the Holy Spirit. We've got it.

So what excuse do we have? None. Always learning, verse 7, never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. If this doesn't scare you, it should.

To believe that we are learning, to believe that we're growing, but we're never actually coming to a knowledge of the truth. This can happen. Oh, I go to a teaching church.

I've got a great expository pastor. Learning is not the same as coming to a knowledge of the truth. These people are learning, but not coming to a knowledge of the truth.

What are you learning? Are you learning about relationship with God? Or are you entering into relationship with God through Christ? You can know all about firearms. There's nothing more dismal than hearing about a firearms instructor who gets shot or shoots someone else in the middle of a firearm safety class. I'm teaching you, but I haven't learned safety.

There's no excuse for a weapon going off accidentally and hurting anyone. But you can be an instructor in such things and become a victim or cause someone else to be a victim because you are not practicing. Knowledge of the truth is the practice of the truth.

The living out of that truth, being an embodiment of the truth, the way the Lord Jesus was an embodiment of the truth. So that is the second point. There is an agenda.

It is to distract and deflect. Satan is behind this. He roams the earth seeking whom he may devour.

Resist him steadfast in the truth. The truth, when we live in it steadfastly, makes us lion proof. That's the second point of application.

And you can detect the agenda behind much of this flattering talk. Does it get people to be subjective? I'm focused on this person who's not teaching right, who's not talking right, who's not believing right. I'm focused on this person who's not representing my understanding of the scripture.

So I've got to warn people that he's a false teacher. He's a Satan in disguise. He's a wolf in sheep's clothing.

Not our job. That is not our job. You can be aware that such things are happening in principle, but getting down in the dirt with flattering, divisive talkers, they're just going to beat you with experience.

Don't do it. You can be aware of the agenda. We can be personally dedicated to avoiding being seduced and being deceived and being caught up in that.

How many times does scripture say, be not deceived? Let no man deceive you. We've seen this throughout our Matthew study. So that's point two.

The third point of application is the flattering seductress, the crafty harlot, tells us what we want to hear. The key to this is, the appeal of it is, the turning point, that which deceives and deflects is, it's what we want to hear. Turn a few pages over to 2 Timothy,

or maybe even it's on the same page in my Bible, 2 Timothy chapter four.

Paul is earnestly pleading with Timothy as a young pastor and teacher, I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at his appearing in his kingdom, preach the word, be ready in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and teaching. This is an assignment. It isn't everybody's assignment.

It is some people's assignment, just as evangelism is not everybody's mission. We should all be ready, but it's not the primary gift, it's not the primary assignment for most people to be an evangelist. It is not the primary assignment to be a teacher of the word.

We certainly ought to be able to share it, explain it, answer questions from people who ask, but there are some of us who are given the assignment as Timothy has been given. Paul doesn't give this exhortation to the Thessalonians or the Corinthians or the people of Galatia, does he? He gives it to Timothy. Timothy has been recognized as someone that has that gift.

Elders have laid their hands on him. The Holy Spirit has communicated. Paul knows what his gift is and Paul says, Timothy, you as a pastor, this is your assignment.

Preach the word, be ready whenever, convince, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and teaching. This echoes what the function of the word of God itself is, right? The word of God is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction. A good pastor is going to put the word out there and that is how he is going to fulfill this charge to convince, rebuke, and exhort with patience and explanation.

Long suffering and teaching, this is patience and explanation. It's a great system. I love that God has graciously imparted his truth to us and wants us to understand it, wants us to be convinced of it, wants us to be exhorted by it, wants us to be rebuked and corrected and instructed through it.

What a great thing. We've not been left orphans. We've got the Holy Spirit and we've got gifts to aid us and to encourage us and to support us and they come through fellowship.

They come through getting together and having a meal the same way. Isn't it fun when you've got a big table and there's lots of people eating a wonderful meal? This is why everybody looks forward to Thanksgiving and Christmas and celebrations. You get together and you commune around a table.

That's what we do in church, in Bible class, is get together and enjoy the meal. Be sustained and energized by it. The time will come, verse 3, when they will not endure sound doctrine.

You're a bibliolater, you're worshiping the Bible, you're in love with the pages and the

cover and not the Christ that they communicate. Everybody who launches that kind of charge is somebody that has never known what it is like to be drawn into Christ and through Christ to the Father via the Scriptures. They've never been there or they couldn't launch this charge and assume that everybody who loves the study of the Word of God is a bibliolater and is off-center and what you need to do is have more love and be warm and syrupy and just accept everything and don't make distinctions and don't apply knowledge that you have from Scripture.

You're just dry. Anybody that says that doesn't know. That's all I can say.

This is the oasis. This is the fount of living waters. I wouldn't know a thing about the Lord Jesus.

I couldn't appreciate Him. I couldn't come to the Father through Him without the revelation of the truth. He is the walking around truth.

This is the written truth. They are the same. And you can't know one without the other.

You can't and you won't. Preach the Word. The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine but according to their own desires.

So dangerous. The seductress plays into desires. They have itching ears and they will heap up to themselves teachers who say what scratches that itch.

I love this message. It sounds so good. It can't be wrong if it feels so right.

And they will turn their ears away from the truth to a message from these teachers. These teachers have a message but it doesn't contain the truth. It doesn't expound and exploit and expose the truth.

It's something else and it is appealing. It is seductive. Those who say what we want to hear.

What is the application of the Word? How can we avoid that? Look at the next verse. You be watchful. Circle it.

Watchfulness. Alertness. Don't be taken unawares.

Don't let the coming of the Lord be like a thief. You are not of the night or of the darkness. Be watchful.

We just saw it in Matthew. Jesus goes to Gethsemane. Could you not watch with me? Could you not be alert? Could you not prepare for the onslaught of the enemy and for the hour of darkness? Could you not join with me in fellowship? Jesus leaves the eight behind that aren't going to do any good.

But Peter, James, and John, these are the ones that ought to be with Jesus in His hour of preparation, in His hour of prayer. But what happens? They are with Him physically but they fall asleep. Now you are not with me.

Could you not watch with me? Three times the Lord Jesus appeals to them, watch with me, pray with me. They divide by going unconscious. They divide by falling asleep.

Not helpful. Is Jesus comforted and encouraged by finding His disciples asleep, the three that He has invested the most in, that have seen the glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, that have seen the raising of the girl in the upper room? Encouraging or discouraging for the Lord Jesus on this night when He most needs unity from those who know the most? Don't disunite. Don't fall asleep on your needy fellow believers.

Be watchful. We need to watch for ourselves. We need to watch for each other.

Be watchful. That's the solution. And that concludes point one from the parable of the crafty harlot.

And that comes from verse five, this immoral seductress that flatters with her words. What is the antidote? What is the warning and the encouragement we should take away? That's what we just covered. Verse six of Proverbs chapter seven, she lurks.

I looked out the lattice and I saw this woman in my residential neighborhood lurking. We saw the contrast in chapter eight, verse one through three of Lady Wisdom at the crossroads by the gate in the daylight, making her appeal to those who are going about legitimate business. They're not alone, wending their way home in the darkness.

Why wasn't this young man home before dark? What's he doing out there? I saw him out my lattice. I was home. I was where I was supposed to be.

He's out and about where he shouldn't be. And she's out there waiting. You remember clear back in Genesis when God was talking to Cain in Genesis chapter four, verse seven, if you do well, you'll be accepted.

But if you're not doing well, remember that if you do well, will you not be accepted? But if not, if you're not doing well, if you're out after dark, if you're wandering streets late, when you shouldn't be out there, sin lies crouching at the door. It has a desire for you. It's got an agenda.

It's got a purpose. It's got a goal. You must overcome it.

One of the ways you overcome it is by not being waylaid and surprised and ambushed by it. So she's lurking. What is the application? It's much the same.

We said point one is largely a summary. And one of the charges that we have is to be watchful, be watchful and persevere. Turn to Matthew chapter seven.

As soon as I say Matthew seven, you say, I know where we are because Matthew five, six, and seven, this is the teaching on the hill for the disciples. What is popularly known as the mount? His disciples came to him and he taught them. It begins with the beatitudes and it goes chapter five, chapter six and chapter seven.

We're in chapter seven and we are looking at verses 15 through 23. Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves, harmonious with what we saw in point one, isn't it? They have a nice appearance. They're seductive.

They're alluring. They've got sheep's clothing. You think, well, this is okay, but it's a deception.

Wearing sheep's clothing is not the same as being a sheep, is it? You will know them by their fruits. Verse 16, do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? I was asking myself this question. Why does Jesus pick these two particular illogical sources? You want to pick some grapes, you want to pick some figs.

If you want grapes, you go to a grapevine. If you want figs, you go to a fig tree, right? Men don't look for and try to gather grapes from thorn bushes and don't try to get figs from thistles. Why? There's two reasons.

How many grapes are on a thorn bush? None. How many figs are on a thistle bush? None. So, A, you're looking in the wrong place, but what's B? Why didn't he say, do men gather grapes from oak trees or figs from sycamores? What do thorns and thistles do if you stick your hand in there, looking for something that isn't there? Not only do you not find what you're looking for, but you get hurt.

It's not only the absence of what is good, but it is the perpetration of what is harmful, hurtful. You will know them by their fruits. First of all, you won't find the truth that you are seeking.

If you are a truth seeker, you'll say, I'm not finding truth here. I'm not getting nourishment and the Holy Spirit can't talk to me because His voice isn't in this message. The Word of God that the Holy Spirit speaks with is not here.

So, A, there will be an emptiness. I am not filled. I'm not helped.

I'm not strengthened. I'm not equipped for the journey. I'm not given the things that God has promised to those who love Him in this place.

I'm not getting grapes and I'm not getting figs. And what is the second thing? I am getting hurt and others who come here looking for truth are getting harmed. There is hurt here.

There are thorn pricks and embedded thistles that separate and infect and wind up getting boils and ugly wounds from this. It will not help and it will hurt. You will not get the productive fruit of the Word and you come away harmed.

Think about these people that emerge from cults and talk about not only were we not getting biblical truth but there was abuse, there was scandalous mistreatment, children out of wedlock and being misled and all of the other cult-like activities. That's kind of the worst case of this. So, what is our application here? Because it lurks and tries to insinuate itself when we're vulnerable in the darkness on the way home.

Somebody is where they shouldn't be and they're going to take advantage. Not going to give you what you need, going to hurt you. Every good tree, Jesus says in 7:17 of Matthew, every good tree bears good fruit.

A bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Therefore, by their fruits you will know them. How do you know if a piece of fruit is good or not? You know, you buy some peaches, put them in a bowl, maybe you cover them with a tea towel or something, maybe you put them in the fridge, maybe you forget about them, they get shoved behind something. I'm not saying this has ever happened in our household.

I'm just, I'm abstracting here. You come back, how do you know if that peach is good? There's two ways. It's appearance and it's effect.

You look at it and it's bruised and soft and leaking. I know what a peach looks like when it's ready to eat. This is not a peach that's ready to eat.

I can tell by looking at it, because I know what a good peach is and I know how a good peach tastes. What did Jesus say? You will know the truth and the truth will liberate you, free you from the arms of the seductress, from the deceptions and the misleading allurements of the world. If you know what's good, I've told you this before, but I really like it.

When they're teaching IRS agents, treasury agents how to spot counterfeit currency, they don't show them all kinds of counterfeits. They school them in what the real thing looks like. This is what to look for in a real bill.

If any of these are missing, it's a bad bill. Know what a good bill looks like. You can spot any fake, whether we showed it to you or not.

Now, I'm sure they look at some bad ones, just like we look at heresies and false teachings, but we don't concentrate on that. We don't spend day after day harping on what is false and what is wrong. Focus on what's true and you are freed from the

deceptive ambush of what's false.

By their fruits, you will know them. Know what good fruit is. If you are a tree that produces good fruit, it takes one to know one.

If you are a good fruit tree, you will instantly be able to spot and bond with another good fruit tree. Bad trees bear bad fruit. If your fruit is of a weird appearance, flavor, and quality, it's bad.

Matthew chapter 7, verses 15 through 23. Flip over to Matthew 24, verse 10. Be watchful and persevere.

This is the application. If this woman is going to be lurking in the street, if the world, if the flesh, if the devil is going to be lurking, waiting for us to be late coming home, be out alone when we shouldn't be, how can we prevent being seduced, being fooled, being deceived? A is be watchful, be able to identify bad fruit, bad talk, bad messages, and B, persevere. Matthew chapter 24, verse 10.

Many are going to be offended and will betray one another and will hate one another. Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. False prophets, false pretending to be true, maybe even thinking they are true, false prophets are going to deceive many.

And because lawlessness will abound, this isn't just lawless behavior, this is lack of knowledge and understanding of the law. If you are lawless, you don't have the law. Once again, the rich man talking to Abraham, send Lazarus to my brothers that they don't come to this terrible place, that they don't make the mistake with their lives that I made with mine.

Abraham says, they have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them. But in the latter days, there will be a lack of Moses and the prophets, there will be a lack of the law, there will be a lack of understanding of what good fruit and good truth is. If you don't know what's true, how can you identify what's false? Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

Notice, love is fed by lawfulness, knowing the law and keeping it. The one who has my words and keeps them, Jesus said in John, he's the one who loves me. And I and my father are going to come to him and make our home with him because there is a love bond there.

The one who has my words and keeps them, he it is that loves me. Because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. What's the problem in our culture, in our society? What's the problem in the visible organized church today? Bible teaching has just fallen completely away.

Bible standards have fallen away. We are lawless and love inevitably grows cold. If you

don't have the revelation of God, if you don't have an appreciation for God, what he has done, what he says, what he's doing, what he's going to do, if that's all evaporated away and you've got a form of godliness that denies the power, there will be no love.

Love will grow cold. But he who perseveres to the end will be delivered. Persevere.

Stick with the word. Stick with the law. Know it.

Keep it. The Lord Jesus and God the Father are going to come. We've already got the Holy Spirit.

You've got the entire Godhead. The power of the Father, the power of the Son, the power of the Holy Spirit resident within you. If God before us, who can be against us? What power is going to overcome the triune God present within us, guiding us, illuminating truth and righteousness? There is no force on earth or in heaven that can overcome us.

So here's the problem. False prophets rising up and deceiving and because lawlessness abounds due to that deception, due to that substitution of tradition, teaching as doctrines the traditions of men and so on, love grows cold. So that is the antidote.

And finally you can put with that Luke chapter 13 verses 23 through 30. We saw Matthew's version of this not long ago. Luke chapter 13, 23 through 30.

Lord, are there few who are being saved? As Jesus goes about preaching and teaching. Somebody said, Lord, are there few being saved? He said to them, strive to enter through the narrow gate. Many I say to you will seek to enter and will not be able.

Once the master of the house has risen up and shut the door and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door saying, Lord, Lord, open for us. He will answer and say to you, I do not know you, where you are from. Notice, I don't know you and I don't know where you are from, where you have been dwelling, where you originate, where you reside.

I don't know you. I don't know where you're from. I am not familiar with either you or your landscape.

You will begin to say we ate and drank in your presence and you taught in our streets, ever learning, hearing the teaching, but not coming to a knowledge of the truth, not coming into relationship with God through Christ. We ate and drank in your presence. This is scary.

We ate and drank in your presence. What did Jesus say back in John 7? You can't just eat and drink in my presence. You've got to eat and drink me.

Remember that? Many of his disciples turned back. Whoa, that's a hard saying. It's not enough to eat and drink in his presence unless you eat my flesh and drink my blood,

Jesus said.

Whoa, that's just too strange for me. We ate and drank in your presence. How many people ate on the hillside when Jesus broke the loaves and fishes? 5,000.

How many were there faithfully with him at the cross, watching and praying? How about the 4,000? 9,000 people ate and drank in his presence. How many of them were at the foot of the cross? You can count them on the fingers of both hands, the ones that are named in scripture, and they're nearly all women. John is the only disciple that's there.

We ate and drank in your presence until the going got tough and then we vanished. Vanished. You taught in our streets.

They don't say, we learned, we embraced, we expressed faith, we came to your father through your testimony. We were in the area, we availed ourselves of the good parts. He will say, I tell you, I do not know you, I do not know where you are from.

You're not from where I'm from. You're not familiar with the kind of domestic life that I'm familiar with. I don't know you.

I don't know where you're from. You dwell in a different sphere. Your environment is strange, foreign, and unknown to me.

I don't know you. I don't know where you're from. And where you're from is incompatible with where I'm from and where I am now, in here eating and drinking at the table.

Where you're from, you don't have the manners, you don't have the insight, you don't have the understanding. You're not qualified to be in here. You're from a different place.

Thus there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. You're going to see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God and yourselves thrust out. You don't belong here.

Don't know you, don't know where you're from. You've got a whole different ethos. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.

And that is just going to grate and grind and chafe on those who thought they were qualified, thought they were righteous. Last will be first, first will be last. So, strive to enter by the narrow gate without diversion or substitution.

Got to eat and drink the real thing. Can't be diverted. Can't accept a substitute.

So many people have a form of godliness denying the power because it's a substitute. It's got an appearance. It's got an externality.

It's got an association. We ate and drank in your presence you taught in our streets. It doesn't say you taught in our homes.

It doesn't say you taught in our hearts. You taught in our streets. We know who you are.

Jesus says, well, I don't know who you are. I don't know what you're eating, what you were drinking, but it wasn't me. I don't know you.

I don't know where you're from. Tragic. Well, this is the means by which we avoid being seduced and distracted and deflected and accepting falsehood instead of truth by the crafty harlot.

Watch for division. Division is the hallmark of the enemy. The Holy Spirit unites us.

God's word unites us. The truth of God's grace, the truth of our salvation, the truth of our future hope unites us. Don't let the enemy divide.

Don't be a part of division and don't be divided. Watch out for those who are pushing an agenda and who are saying what the flesh wants to hear. That was point one.

Point two, be watchful and persevere. Stick with the true fruit. Don't go looking for figs on thistles.

Don't go looking for grapes on thorns. You'll only get hurt. You'll never find it there.

You will know them by their fruits. Be a tree producing good fruit and you'll be able to recognize other trees producing good fruit. That's your fellowship.

That's your source of nourishment and encouragement. Well, we'll pick up with point three and following next time. We'll close here in a word of prayer.

Father, thank you for thoroughly equipping us for every good work through all of the scriptures that you have inspired that are profitable to us for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction. We pray the Holy Spirit will find us ready pupils, a plowable soil where this seed can sink deep and produce fruit that is visible, that is manifest, that lets us partake of the fulfillment of all of your promises and makes us productive and useful as servants, as children, and as future heirs with Christ in the kingdoms that are to come. We pray it in Jesus' name.

Amen.