

## Proverbs 23-02-15a

Good Wednesday evening, it is the 15th day of February 2023. Wednesday night Bible class at Grace and Truth Bible Church in Proverbs. We're going to finish up our look at the Crafty Harlot tonight and do a little bit of comparison contrast.

Let's take a moment to ask God's blessing on our study, on our fellowship, on our memory, and on our application. Father, your grace is limitless and your mercy toward us has been so fully expressed in the words and the works of the Lord Jesus, his sacrifice on our behalf, his ongoing ministry of representation. Our hope is for his return to take us to himself and present us before you.

We pray that the things we look at tonight from your word will prepare us for that time, that opportunity, and that we will grow in grace and knowledge and learn to represent the Lord Jesus in this life as we hope to do so in the next. We ask it in Jesus name, amen. Well, we over the last few weeks have looked at these 12 characteristics of the deceit that prevails in the world, the techniques that it uses, the flattering approach, the appeal to self-interest and self-gratification, the veneer of righteousness in claiming to have performed the obligations that are required of an Israelite in terms of sacrifice, the willful coloring outside the lines, being loud and rebellious and not being where one is supposed to be.

Looking at Proverbs chapter seven, the one verse describing this harlot that we have not dwelt much upon is after verse 17, I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love until morning. Let us delight ourselves with love.

And this of course is a direct appeal that both she and her victim will have a wonderful experience of gratification. It will be a high point. It will be stimulating.

It will be pleasurable. But it is also momentary, relatively speaking. This is a night.

Let us take our fill of love until morning. So she approaches him in the dark and all of this is going to happen in the dark when the light shines, they've got to be back in some sort of respectable appearance, but look at the next verse. Why can he come to her house and spend this night? Because the house belongs to someone else.

My husband is not at home. He has gone on a long journey. He has taken a bag of money with him and will come home on the appointed day.

So I know he's going to be gone and he's not going to be back tonight so we can take advantage of his absence and do things we would never do in his presence. We can use his stuff. You can sleep in his place, in his bed with his wife and take what belongs to him for yourself.

That's about as illicit a form of pleasure as you can imagine. This is a form of theft as well as entering into adultery with a woman. Once she says she has a husband, now she's not only a seductress, but she is a harlot and a married harlot at that.

So verse 21, with her enticing speech, she causes him to yield with her flattering lips. She seduced him immediately. He went after her as an ox goes to the slaughter or as the fool to the correction of the stocks.

Or if you take the variation in the Syriac and Targums as a dog to the chain. A dog to the leash, a dog, you know, chained outside losing his freedom until verse 23, an arrow struck his liver as a bird hastens to the snare. He did not know it is his life.

It's not just a momentary dalliance. It is his life. This is a life ending event potentially.

So the first thing we want to do tonight, we're going to do two things, one in this session and one in the next. First thing, if you still have your notes from a few weeks ago on the parable of the crafty harlot, we're going to be looking at the 13th and 14th point, the bottom of that page, if you want to follow along and save yourself some writing of references or verify the references. 13 is Old Testament, 14 is New Testament on the representation that is accomplished in the Bible using fornication, adultery, harlots, illicit intercourse of any kind as a symbol and as a metaphor for spiritual malfunction, spiritual infidelity, spiritual unfaithfulness.

So as it says here, adultery and fornication are used as a figure. You have it back in Leviticus chapter 20, verse five, where in the law of Moses coming down from God on Sinai, the Lord spoke to Moses in chapter 20, whoever of the children of Israel or one of the strangers who dwell in Israel who gives any of his descendants to Molech, he shall surely be put to death. The people of the land shall stone him with stones.

When it says descendants, this means children, as in small children, as in putting them in the belly of the idol. So Leviticus chapter 20, once again, I will set my face against that man in verse three and will cut him off from his people because he has given his descendants, his children to Molech to defile my sanctuary and profane my holy name. This wasn't just idolatry.

This was extreme idolatry. This was idolatry at the cost of your child's life. And idolatry, why would someone practice it? Why would someone worship a false god? It is in the belief that there is advantage, prosperity, crops, flocks, herds, business success, good weather, avoiding drought, avoiding invasion, avoiding being taken advantage of by invading neighbors.

Something makes one, you don't just say, you know, I woke up today feeling like I need to worship some idol somewhere. There's always a motivation. Someone wants to score advantage.

They want a tactical leverage in some way, and they believe wrongly, of course, that this is going to work some good. And well, surely if I burn a baby in the furnace, this will bring about some serious obligation on the part of Molech to prosper me. Look what I gave Molech.

He's going to return it in kind. I will convert my child into prosperity and pleasure for myself. It's not hard to see the parallel in the modern day with people who will sacrifice an unborn child for the same exact reasons.

I will gain an advantage. My life will be better if I sacrifice this life on my own account and for my own purposes. Verse four, and if the people of the land should in any way hide their eyes from the man when he gives his descendants to Molech and they do not kill him, then I will set my face against that man and against his family, and I will cut him off from his people.

Notice this is similar to the honor concept at the Naval Academy and at West Point. There is a difference between the honor code at West Point and the honor concept at Navy. At West Point, the honor concept says, I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I tolerate those who do.

And if you become aware of someone perpetrating theft, deceit, or cheating, you're required by the honor code at West Point to report them and turn them in unless something has changed in the last 40 or 50 years. At Navy, the honor concept is a midshipman will not lie, cheat, or steal. It becomes a matter of discretion and judgment if you come to knowledge of someone who is doing those things.

You have the option of doing nothing. You have the option of going to the individual and saying, I saw that, don't do it again, or of doing the West Point thing and turning them directly into the authorities. It depends on severity.

It depends on consequences. It depends on the individual circumstances. And Navy midshipmen and those who supervise the academy have always felt that the exercise of judgment was a valuable lesson to be absorbed because that's how things work after you graduate.

In real life, in the fleet, you don't always run somebody off the gangplank for a minor infraction. You have options. However, notice here, whoever of the children of Israel or of the strangers who dwell in Israel, who gives any of his children to Molech, he shall be put to death.

The people of the land shall stone him with stones. It is a capital offense to sacrifice a child for your own purposes, for your own betterment, because you're thinking it's going to do you some kind of good. I will set my face against that man.

I will cut him off from his people because he has given his children to Molech to defile my

sanctuary and profane my holy name. There is only one God worthy of absolute dedication, and that is the God of Israel, and he does not require child sacrifice. If the people of the land should in any way hide their eyes from the man, if the people do not call him out and stone him with stones, they choose to ignore this action.

They do not kill him. I will set my face against that man and against his family. I will cut him off from his people and all who prostitute themselves with him to commit harlotry with Molech and the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits to prostitute himself with them.

I will set my face against that person and cut him off from his people. Consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy for I am the Lord your God." Prostitute himself is the word that is used. It is metaphorical.

It is figurative spiritual adultery, spiritual fornication. So that is Deuteronomy chapter 20, verse 5. You also have the passage in 2 Chronicles chapter 21, verse 1. 2 Chronicles 21, the beginning of the chapter. Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David.

Jehoram, his son, reigned in his place. He had brothers. Their father gave them great gifts of silver and gold.

When he was established over the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself. In verse 4, killed all of his brothers with the sword, also others of the princes of Israel. He was 32 when he became king.

He reigned eight years. He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, verse 6, just as the house of Ahab had done. This is a southern king, as you might remember.

He is in the city of David. This is a king of Judah, but he's acting like Ahab. He had the daughter of Ahab as a wife.

He did evil in the sight of the Lord. Yet the Lord would not destroy the house of David because of the covenant that he had made with David, since he had promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever. In his days, Edom revolted against Judah's authority.

Jehoram went out with his officers. Verse 11, moreover, he made high places in the mountains of Judah and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit harlotry and led Judah astray. Harlotry.

Being led astray. Being led astray. This is what our harlot in Proverbs chapter 7 and again in chapter 9 is doing.

It's leading people astray. So we conclude that point with Jeremiah chapter 3. And it's the bulk of the chapter. I'll just sample a little bit of this.

They say, if a man divorces his wife and she goes from him and becomes another man's, may he return to her again? Would not the land be greatly polluted? But you have played the harlot with many lovers yet return to me, says the Lord. Lift up your eyes to the desolate heights and see where have you not lain with men? By the road you have set for them like an Arabian in the wilderness and you have polluted the land with your harlotries and your wickedness. Therefore, the rain showers have been withheld.

There's been no latter rain. You have had a harlot's forehead. You refuse to be ashamed.

Will you not from this time cry to me, my father, you are the guide of my youth. Will you remain angry forever? Will he keep to the end? You have spoken and done evil things as you were able. And you can go on through the rest of that chapter.

You go down to verse 12, return back sliding. Israel says the Lord, I will not cause my anger to fall on you for I am merciful. I will not remain angry forever.

Only acknowledge your iniquity that you have transgressed against the Lord, your God, and have scattered your charms to alien deities under every green tree. And you have not obeyed my voice. It is a picture of harlotry, spiritual adultery, spiritual unfaithfulness.

So as we look at this section of Proverbs, we recognize that this is not simply a warning against infidelity or unwise consorting with women of the evening, married or unmarried. This is an exhortation to everyone, to all of us to watch our step in terms of what we allow ourselves to be convinced of, to what appeals and allures do we submit and succumb. Our 14th point there are the New Testament parallels, and this is really fascinating.

I had a good time looking at these. You begin in Revelation chapter two, verse 20 and in the section, of course, of the letters to the seven churches. And when you come to the Thyatiran church, beginning in verse 18, these things says the son of God who has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like fine brass.

I know your works, your love, your service, your patience, as for your works, the last are more than the first. Nevertheless, I have a few things against you because you allow that woman Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess to teach and seduce my servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. In the actual day of Thyatira, it is likely that this was actually physical acts of adultery and fornication and participating in idolatrous practices.

But in our scripture, it comes to represent the very same thing we're seeing in Proverbs, very same thing we saw in the Old Testament, which is spiritual harlotry, spiritual implication and complication with things that compete with our relationship with God and our worship of him. I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality and she did not repent. Time to repent.

There is the charge, there is the allegation, there is the pointing out and there is an opportunity to change the mind, to cease the bad behavior, to return all day long. I have held out my hands to a disobedient, stiff-necked people. Turn ye at my reproof.

You can't reprove and then immediately judge. There has to be time to respond to the reproof. So the reproof comes and then there is a space to see if there will be response.

Turn ye at my reproof. Why will you die, O house of Israel? Same thing here in Thyatira. There has been the pointing out of this error.

It has been labeled an error, identified as contrary to God's will. I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality and she did not repent. This is therefore followed by, Indeed, I will cast her into a sickbed and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds.

When it is pointed out, there is the opportunity to turn before judgment. Mercy and grace before judgment, but the judgment is severe. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts.

Notice, this adultery is taking place in the hidden places of the mind and the heart. God sees what others may not see. And I will give each one of you according to your works.

Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden. The depths of Satan. Satan occurs a lot in these letters.

But that is Revelation 2.20. And if you flip over to Revelation 17, our very familiar section on the scarlet harlot. And she is perhaps the most prominent, the most obvious symbol of spiritual fornication and adultery and compromise and evil. This first six verses, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters with whom the kings of the earth commit fornication.

Inhabitants of the earth may drunk with the wine of her fornication. May drunk with the wine. This is really interesting because the harlot is an entity, a womanly force.

We've seen two women in our Proverbs context, the lady wisdom and the crafty harlot. This is a harlot. And the same thing that is observed in terms of what she does to the naive young man in taking him down and plying him with sensual gratification.

And he ends up with an arrow in his liver happens to the inhabitants of the earth. The inhabitants of the earth in verse two are made drunk with the wine of her fornication. She is committing the fornication.

She is cleaving people off of the solid rock. And people are putting up with it and being deceived into it and given a pleasant experience, so to speak, by getting drunk on the

wine that she produces with this fornication. The inhabitants of the earth are made drunk.

They are rendered insensible. Their perspicacity is dulled. Their observation, their interpretation and application are all dulled.

She is giving them this wine. And so John is carried away into the wilderness and he sees the woman sitting on the scarlet beast, names of blasphemy, seven heads, ten horns, arrayed in purple and scarlet, precious stones and pearls. Notice all of this finery.

This is the allure of wealth and prosperity. People are dazzled when they see someone driving hugely expensive automobiles and living in opulent dwellings with a lot of finery and gold jewelry and very impressive apparel that obviously cost vast sums of money. Why do you think she's arrayed with all of this stuff? It impresses.

It fools people. She must be doing something right because look at how prosperous she is. Think megachurch.

Well, they must be doing something. God must be blessing. Look at the size of the church.

Look at the size of their building. Look at the telemetry coming out of that place. Look at the lights and the equipment and the electronics and the TV time and the social media net they spread and the amount of money that they make on resources and so on.

Full of abominations. This golden cup in her hand is full of abominations and the filthiness of her fornication. Fornication.

Mystery Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth. This harlotry that we're looking at, the parable of the crafty harlot. This is any draw into worldly pleasures that take the place of.

This is why it is so insidious because it doesn't have to be inherently evil. You say, oh, look, here's Satan worship. Here's a big pentagram and candles and a goat head.

And well, I better stay away from that. That's Satan worship. It doesn't have to be implicitly inherently evil.

It becomes evil when it sits in God's seat. It takes the place of God. What is the first commandment? What's the number one thing God said at Sinai when he started the tablets? Thou shalt have no other God ahead of me.

If God takes second place, if our relationship with the father through Christ takes third place or fourth place behind fill in the blank, whatever is in that blank is what's in this golden cup. It is the wine that is making us drunk. And instead of being filled with the spirit, we are filled with the momentary sensuality and sensual gratification that we seek

instead of remembering who we are and why we're here.

So this is the idea. And you can see it very clearly as you dwell on this scarlet harlot in Revelation chapter 17. Now, this helps us to crack a mystery.

At least it was a mystery to me. You may have had this figured out and you didn't tell me, but I have wondered about this for a long time. And it has to do with something a few chapters back in Revelation 14.

Revelation 14, John has just seen the beast rise up from the sea and he's seen another beast rise up from the earth in Revelation 13. And we realize that we are in the seven year, what we call the tribulation period, the 70th week of Daniel. And so you've got the beast and the false prophet, the first beast and the second beast.

And the most famous verse in Revelation is 13, 18. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of the world wide web.

Wow, wow, wow. Six, six, six. No, I'm kidding.

It's the number of a man, six, six, six, which is the sixth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, WWW. Be that as it may. Then in chapter 14, then I looked and behold, just after seeing these evil beasts, one arise out of the sea, one arise out of the earth.

I looked and behold a lamb standing on Mount Zion and with him 144,000 having his father's name written on their foreheads. Where does the mark of the beast go on the forehead and on the hand? Remember these guys can't take the mark of the beast. Why? There is something already there and it is the name of the father.

So this idea that whatever is going to take God's place is the abomination is the fornication is the adultery is the, the plying of the seductress harlots skills to put something in God's place. These guys didn't buy it. They didn't take the mark of the beast.

They've got the father's name where somebody's trying to put that. And this is the best form of prevention is to put our spiritual resources in place of that which tries to pull us away. And you can figure out the practical implications of that.

These guys, there's nobody can stamp a mark of the beast there. The father's name is already branded on their forehead. I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, like the voice of loud thunder.

I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who were redeemed from the earth.

So there's always been a big puzzle to me. How can there be a song that you can't learn? Well, if you watched any part of the super bowl halftime, which I normally don't, but because there was an ASL interpretation, I steeled myself and dug in my fingers and watched the halftime music so that we could watch the interpreter and see what they did with the so-called words. I promise you, I can't learn those songs.

I am completely unacquainted with whatever paradigm constitutes that alleged music. I have no capacity to learn. You can't whistle it.

You can't sing it. You can't do that kind of dancing unless you're in way better shape than I am. Nor would you want to where anybody could see you because it's pornographic and heinous.

And if you think the halftime was bad, you should have seen some of what was presented before the game, which I saw. And I wasn't sure what I heard. And so I looked up the song lyrics and was sorry I did.

When you talk about the filth of fornication that's in this cup, well, look at the songs that were sung and what they say. And there you go. So if that is the kind of song that you sing, you are never going to be able to learn the song of the lamb.

It is either or. There's only one spot where this material can reside. Your cup is either the cup that the Lord Jesus handed his disciples, which is the new covenant in his blood, metaphorically speaking, or it is the cup of filth and fornication that the harlot holds.

Everybody's got a cup, but that cup can only hold one thing or the other, not both. You can't mingle them. You can't mix them.

A little leaven leavens a whole lump, a little bit of filth, and that blood of the covenant is no longer present. God is not going to corrupt his righteousness and his holiness with what people choose in its stead. You begin to worship an idol.

God isn't going to receive you. God is going to judge you. That's what we saw in Deuteronomy.

Notice then in verse four, these are the ones who were not defiled with women, for they are virgins. Now, this seems like an extremely odd requirement that you would find 12,000 young men in each of the 12 tribes listed in Revelation that are virgins. If this were merely physical, this would be peculiar indeed.

But with our understanding now of what harlotry and fornication and adultery symbolize, Old Testament and New, and this name written in the forehead, it isn't the physical problem of stamping a different name on the head, is it? This is commitment. This is identification. This is spiritual truth.

These individuals are undefiled in terms of their spiritual commitment to God. They have not broken their faith, their truth. They have not violated their pledge, their vow.

They have committed themselves to God in faith, and they are virgins. They have never compromised, corrupted, or violated that commitment. That's the kind of virgin that they are, and it makes a great deal more sense in this context.

Notice that these are the ones who follow the lamb wherever he goes. Now, this would be somewhat inconvenient if any time Jesus stood up and wanted to walk around, 144,000 people crowd in with him. Again, this is all figurative.

It doesn't mean that it's not real. It doesn't mean that it's not hugely important and significant, but the figure is put for a transcendent truth that is even more important than mere physical accompaniment or a physical name on the forehead or a physical form of virginity. This is higher, greater, and more pertinent truth all the way through.

So the 144,000 virginal followers of the lamb here are another part of this spiritual picture we are coming to understand from looking at the parable of the crafty harlot, the scarlet harlot in Revelation 17, and like passages throughout the Old Testament and new. So hopefully that is helpful. And as a point of application, it is to recognize that we can easily justify ourselves and say, well, these heinous practices are not a part of my life.

They're not something that I do. And we give ourselves a pass without analyzing whether we are allowing legitimate things to become illegitimate by where we put them in our priorities. Food is perfectly fine, but if you eat too much of it and become a glutton, now your food is sin.

If it is meat offered to an idol and your conscience convicts you about it and you eat it anyway and you violate the standards of your own conscience, that is sin because it is not of faith. Nothing wrong with eating food per se. What is the context? What is the motivation? What is your conscience telling you as you do it? What does a biblical standard of evaluation tell you? Are you doing something legitimate, but you are causing a brother to stumble? Are you doing something legitimate, but you are doing it to excess? Are you engaging a thing that is normally fine and converting it into something that is evil? The act of intercourse between a man and a woman is not intrinsically wrong at all.

It is entirely the context. What are the circumstances? Has there been a prior covenant been made with someone else and now you're doing it? Are you doing it with the person in whom you have a covenant relationship, with whom you have a marriage bond? It's all about context and circumstance. Nothing intrinsically wrong with the act.

It is with whom, when, why, and at what cost to others that turns it into a vicious and

judgment-worthy evil. So this is the standard of evaluation by which we need to check ourselves. It's not enough to say, you know, I don't take a gun and knock over liquor stores.

We can be a thief by robbing others of the expression of love that is the second great commandment that is like unto the first, love your neighbor as yourself. We can become a thief by taking time and attention that belongs to God and the things of God and spending it on worldly gratification. Nothing intrinsically wrong with a TV.

Nothing intrinsically, well, generally, there's nothing intrinsically wrong with a movie. It kind of depends on which ones you pick. There are many things, there are hobbies, there are occupations, there are vocations and avocations.

Nothing intrinsically wrong with them, but they become wrong in the context of our life when they are put in the place of things where God's presence and God's priorities should be. This is the self-check. This is the gut check we need to be making.

We can be walking down the dark alley with the crafty harlot and not even realize it because as Debbie Boone so famously sang, it can't be wrong if it feels so right. Do you light up my life? No, you're taking me down a dark alley in many cases. Sometimes if it feels so right, that's only going to be temporary and the cold light of dawn is going to reveal its true nature.

Well, that having been said, let's pause here and take our break. When we come back, we're going to do a little comparison contrast that will, I think, be a lot of fun.