

Sermon 24, Profiles in Folly #4: The Pleasures of Liver-Shot Lust / Simpleton and Seductress, Proverbs 7

Proposition: Love wisdom, or “love” a deadly slut.

- I. Listen to the Father’s Commands and Live, vv. 1-3
 - II. Love the Father’s Commands and Find Protection, vv. 4-5
 - III. Listen to the Strange Woman and Die, vv. 6-23
 - IV. Listen to the Father’s Words and Live, vv. 24-27
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Introduction

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, our text this morning winds up the profiles in folly that Solomon has stacked here in the middle of the first section of Proverbs. And, as we had last week, it is another warning against sexual folly. Rather than simply telling us

⁹ Outline taken with few modifications from Kidner, *Proverbs*, 75-76.

how wrong adultery is, though, the father relates the story of a time when he actually witnessed an adulterous scenario playing out. He tells how he saw a simpleton fall victim to the adulterous woman, and he uses this anecdote to convince his son that adultery is not worth it — that adultery, in fact, kills.

It's important to note at the outset that no amount of punishment can soften hard hearts or change minds bent on evil. This chapter is not addressed to the simpleton who happily falls into bed with the slut. It is addressed to the son, the one who wants to be like his wise father. Brothers and sisters, if you're not my brothers and sisters, if you're not sons of God our one Father, then the warnings of this chapter will mean nothing to you. Listen to this, from the pen of a homosexual filmmakers in Britain during the AIDS crisis.

'As I sweat it out in the early hours, a "guilty victim" of the scourge,' Jarman wrote in his diary in September 1989, 'I want to bear witness how happy I am, and will be until the day I die, that I was part of the hated sexual revolution; and that I don't regret a single step or encounter I made in that time; and if I write in future with regret, it will be a reflection of a temporary indisposition.'¹⁰

Now what do you think of that? Here we have someone acknowledging that the sexual revolution is hated. We have someone acknowledging that his body is literally being eaten away by AIDS. He would, in fact, die in 1994. And yet, does that give him pause? Apparently not. Even so, if you are hell-bent on lust this morning, the revelation here in Proverbs 7 will not faze you. It may even do the reverse, and turn you on even more. All this is to say that you must be the right kind of listener in order to profit from this sermon. If you are a happy sexual revolutionary, then you will have no desire to listen to the word of God that warns here about the deadly danger of adultery.

I. Prologue, vv. 1-5

Again, as we have had occasion to observe over and over, the father tells his son to retain his words. The emphasis here falls more on retention, on storing or treasuring the words. Don't forget! Why? Because when you're tempted to lust, you will forget. Or at least, you will want to forget. You will not want to remember why lust is wrong. You will likely be unable even to think of a cogent objection to sinful behavior. Like Derek Jarman, you will say "I don't regret any of it" while you lie there dying a horrible death. So don't forget! Listen to the Father's words, and retain them in your memory. Really, brothers and sisters, the prologue to our chapter this morning poses two questions to us.

A. To whom do you Listen?, vv. 1-3

The first one asks who you listen to. What do you remember? The words of the Bible or the words of your favorite poet, novelist, pundit? Are you more up on Leviticus or on the price of coal and the size of your retirement portfolio? Brothers and sisters, you need to retain and

¹⁰ Tom Crewe, "Here Was a Plague," *London Review of Books* 40.18 (27 September 2018), 16, found at https://www.lrb.co.uk/v40/n18/tom-crewe/herewasaplague?utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=4018&utm_content=usca_subs

treasure the Father's words like you keep the pupil of your eye. Most of us have no desire to have our pupils disturbed. We don't like that one little bit. We instinctively flinch and close our eyes anytime anything gets even close to that pupil. Is that how protective you are of the word of God? Obviously, of course, God's word is indestructible, and our eyes are not. They are soft and squishy and all-too-easily damaged. But the point remains. Guard these words of the Father the same way you protect your eyes. If you wouldn't grind steel or install insulation without eye protection, why would you embark on life with no plans to get and keep God's word within you?

Remember, too, what we said last week about putting wisdom on the tablet of your heart. What does that mean, aside from remembering it? It means learning to love it! If wisdom is written on your heart, you not only know what wisdom would say to do; you want to do what it says.

B. What do you Love, vv. 4-5

Indeed, this writing on the tablet of the heart brings up the question, "What do you love?" Do you love God's standard? Do you love wisdom? In the Ancient Near East, "sister" was a term of endearment for one's wife. Hence the constant refrain in the Song of Songs, "my sister, my spouse." Do you love wisdom like a bride? Do you know her as well as your closest friend? That's the question here. With whom do you spend your time? The question is deeply practical, because the only way you can avoid sexual sin is to love Jesus more than you love that illicit pleasure. That's the point. You will either love wisdom and spend time with her, or you will love a heartless slut. The point is made dramatically in this chapter, and baldly stated at the end of the next. One of you recently told me that he saw a sign advertising "beer as cold as your ex's heart." Well, that's how cold the heart of the strange woman is. She is "wily of heart," or what we would call cold-hearted. She has no care for her victim; she just uses him. In the real world, of course, this kind of woman may be rather rare. That doesn't mean that this warning is useless. As always, Solomon is showing us the most dramatic instance of a particular sin and reminding us that any form or degree of that sin tends toward this consummate expression of it. Any little bit of lust is, at root, a desire to experience the ultimate in illicit orgasm, which is the orgasm of death.

So do you love Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God? Do you talk with Him when you wake up? Do you call Him your most intimate friend? If not, then you have no protection from the strange woman. You have no protection, in other words, from your own lustful, sick, twisted heart that thinks it's some kind of score to fall into bed with such a heartless bitch.

II. Drama, vv. 6-23

Let me explain what I mean, the Father says. He then begins to narrate an anecdote that features two characters, the simpleton and the seductress. This is an unequal fight from the beginning. The fool doesn't stand a chance.

A. The Victim, vv. 6-9

We are introduced to one of the simpletons in particular. He has no heart, the Hebrew literally says. In idiomatic English, we would say that he was senseless or brainless. Here's a featherbrain, a nitwit! And what does he do? He walks right into the danger zone.

B. The Huntress, vv. 10-12

She, meanwhile, is the wife of a well-off man who seems to be on a business trip. She is not a professional prostitute, or a poor woman who just needs some love. She has put on something revealing, the kind of thing a whore might wear, and gone out to find some action. The equivalent today would be something like starting a Tinder profile. Notice how this woman is further characterized. The father seems to suggest that the woman is a neighbor of his, that he could see her house from his window and that he knows the kind of person she is. She is loud and rebellious. She does not submit to the law of God, or the dictates of her husband, and she raises her voice regularly. She's not meek and quiet, which is something God delights to see in His daughters. She's loud.

Notice, too, that her feet do not stay at home. Why does the father include this detail in his quick character sketch? What could possibly be wrong with going out for coffee, to the grocery store, to this event and that event? How does this fit with truly bad things like "rebellious" and "guarded of heart"? Brothers and sisters, it is clear that God's instruction for wives is that they keep their home — "keepers at home," as Titus says, not "keepers who are never home." A wife whose feet do not stay at home is a discontent wife, a wife who is open to the idea of tearing her home down by committing adultery with a featherbrained stranger. She was out and about, all the time, looking for something more exciting than keeping house.

I can see it now: *Desperate Housewives of Ancient Jerusalem*. This woman is a desperate housewife, desperate to rebel against her husband's authority, desperate to find some other partner, desperate to give herself away sexually.

C. The Tactics, vv. 13-21

And so what does she do to seduce the idiot who's wandered right past her house?

1. Groping, v. 13

She walks right up and gropes him. Now, the text does not say where she grabbed him, but in a sense, it doesn't matter. When you grab a guy and kiss him, what message are you sending? Probably not "I would like to discuss my philosophy paper with you sometime." Probably something more like, "Hey, fool, I'll f-k you." The strange woman, the woman who belongs to another man, begins by grabbing and kissing this simpleton.

2. Suggestive Speech, v. 14

She proceeds to speak suggestively, probably hinting that she has a feast at home, and also claiming to be a wonderful religious person who has just been to the Temple and offered her peace offerings. "Let's go back to my place for coffee." Does that mean just coffee? And does the leftover peace offering here mean just peace offering?

3. Flattery, v. 15

And then, she flatters the young man, telling him that she was looking for him in particular. It kind of falls flat for the reader, of course. As far the narrative goes, they seem to be perfect strangers to one another. How could she be looking for him in particular when she has no idea who he is, has never met him before, and is just looking for a partner for a night of wholesale adulterous f---ing? But that's the point, of course. The illusion of intimacy that cheap sex brings is matched by the illusion that she actually cares who she sleeps with.

4. Sensual Indulgence, vv. 16-18

And indeed, her discourse quickly moves from the religious and quasi-intimate “I offered sacrifices and I was just looking for you” into the outright sexual. She talks all about her bed and how expensively it’s decked out — notice that even then Egyptian fabric was thought to be extra-special. This bed is not a cheap bed; these spices were extravagant. And yet she says that she has freely scattered them.

The simpleton never stops to ask himself, “What’s in it for her? Why is she giving me all this?” He simply believes her. The promise of sensual indulgence gives him a hard-on. Rather than saying, “Good evening, ma’am” and moving on, he just stands there listening — and, we might think, fantasizing.

Is that how you handle temptation? Just stand there and listen to it while it titillates your mind, grabs your crotch, kisses your lips, and utters all sorts of ridiculous promises? The father is telling you that the kind of person who handles temptation that way is a fool.

5. Reassurance, vv. 19-20

But this desperate housewife reassures the young simpleton that he has nothing to fear. Yes, yes, cuckolded men might fancy beating you into a pulp. But not if they never know! The husband will be out of town for the next two weeks at least; there’s no way he’ll know that you and I were getting it on together tonight.

D. The Kill, vv. 21-23

And so, the vacillating fool suddenly yields. He makes a snap decision, and that decision is to fall into bed with her. She may have been dressed to kill, but it wasn’t her looks that got him. It was her discourse. Men, do you watch against the discourse of the adulterous woman? Do you listen to and believe it? Remember, you can say a lot by how you’re dressed and how you walk. You can say a lot by how your photograph is composed. Porn says “I want to experience sexual pleasure, and I don’t care who it’s with.” Do you believe that lie?

So he went after her, like a liver-shot deer, like a bird into a trap or an ox to the slaughter. One commentator suggests putting the first line of v. 23 at the end — that certainly makes for a dramatic reading, doesn’t it? He had no idea what it would cost until he was dead.

The story ends here. You can fill in the rest. Sin leads to death, and in some sense, it doesn’t matter how you get there. As soon as you decide to give yourself to sin, you are on the highway to hell, and you will arrive there unless something changes. You cannot go toward hell

and expect to arrive at Heaven! The fool fell for it like a ton of bricks. His featherbrain was not smart enough to say no to the offer of easy sexual intercourse.

III. Application, vv. 24-27

So, what's the moral of the story?

A. Listen to your Father, v. 24

Listen to your father! Pay attention to what he has to say. There are two competing discourses in this chapter: the father's and the strange woman's. Did you notice that the fool didn't say anything? He didn't have to. His actions did the talking for him. But the father says, in effect, "If you don't listen to me you will end up listening to the strange woman someday." If your mind isn't full of Scripture, if your heart isn't full of the wisdom of God, if you don't know and don't care what God said, then you will be a sitting duck for sexual folly.

B. Guard Your Heart, v. 25a

Second, guard your heart. Remember, your heart, or a piece of it, wants to get into bed with the strange woman. You have to stop it. You can't let it turn aside and follow her ways. The part of your heart that loves wisdom has to be larger and stronger than the part that is attracted by the thought of the strange woman. Guard your heart against her! Again, because of the time in which we live, let me emphasize that Solomon was well aware that sexual sin is not all on the woman's side. That's why he began by telling men not to lust, and why he addresses men throughout as the ones who need sexual self-control. But at the same time, he is utterly realistic about the fact that some women are okay with having casual encounters, and he plainly tells men not to do it. Don't you dare get into bed, or even entertain the idea of getting into bed, with the strange woman!

C. Keep Away, v. 25b

Instead, keep away from her. Don't get into her paths. Don't follow her on Twitter. Don't friend her on Facebook. Don't loiter at her desk at work. Don't offer her a ride. Don't walk by her house. Don't! Instead, keep away from her. If you know she's to be found somewhere, don't you be found there. If you know that the military wives with deployed husbands hang out at such-and-such club, don't frequent it!

D. Look Past the Temptress, vv. 26-27

Instead, look past her.

1. To Her Casualties, v. 26

When you see her, think of her casualties — David, Solomon, Samson. They were all strong men who fell apart when the right (wrong) woman came along. If you think that you can handle womanizing, then you'd better think again. Are you tougher than Samson? Better at hand-to-hand combat than David? Wiser than Solomon. Yeah, I thought not. These *femmes fatales* will have you for lunch, bimbo. There are a number of people in hell today because they thought they could handle wily women. That's what v. 26 says.

2. To Death's Bedroom, v. 27

Her bedroom is death's bedroom. Her vagina is a gateway to hell, and the man who goes in won't come out. We saw that in ch. 2, of course, and we see it again here. When you see a sexy woman who's sending that "I'm available" signal, listen to your father and look past her. Don't harden yourself and say "I'm glad that I participated in the sexual revolution." Don't say "This sin is worth it." No sin is worth it. This sin will land you in hell and death before you know it.

So what do you see when you see a married woman who's interested in having an affair? Do you see a good time? Or do you see grinning death?

Love wisdom. Love Christ. And flee from adultery. It will split your liver wide open every time. Amen.