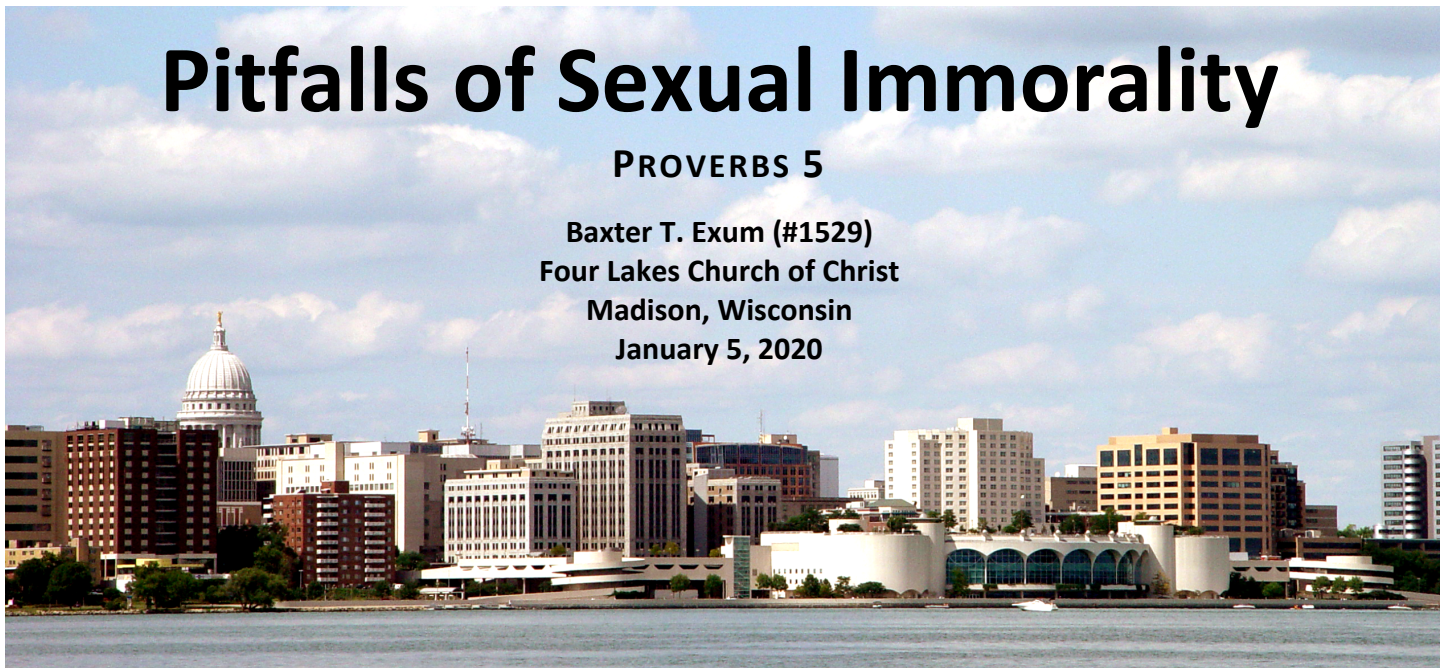


Pitfalls of Sexual Immorality

PROVERBS 5

Baxter T. Exum (#1529)
Four Lakes Church of Christ
Madison, Wisconsin
January 5, 2020



Over the past several years, we have been doing an extended and very sporadic study of the book of Proverbs. We've looked at the first four chapters up to this point, and today I want us to continue by looking at Proverbs 5 (p. 1007). As we make our way to Proverbs 5, and as you notice the chapter heading, you might notice that the NASB has given us a summary, the "Pitfalls of Immorality." And I find that interesting, since Jim's lesson last week was titled "Pitfalls." I am so thankful that Jim was willing to preach last week. He had some very good words, and if you missed it, I would encourage you to go to the church's website and pay attention to that lesson. The video is archived on the livestream page as well.

But Proverbs 5 is about the pitfalls of sexual immorality in particular, ****PPT**** and it's one of two chapters in Proverbs dedicated completely to this issue – Proverbs 5 and Proverbs 7. And if you know anything about Proverbs, then you might realize how rare it is to have an entire chapter dedicated to anything! Often, the Proverbs are totally random; disconnected tidbits of wisdom, with no real context between verses. But Proverbs chapters 5 and 7 are different, and they are also unusual because they contain the single largest collection of verses on sexual purity anywhere in the Bible (in the Old or in the New). And it is especially interesting how relevant all of this is. Three thousand years ago, as King Solomon has the talk with his son, he warns him about some of the same things we warn our own children about even today. And the advice here is practical. This isn't just about the big sins that only "other people" commit (that's a danger in a study like this, that we only talk about what "other people" are doing, that we just point our finger at the world), but what Solomon writes here applies to almost all of us in some way or another. His words apply to anyone who has ever experienced or given in to any kind of a sexual temptation, either physically or in the mind, and that's probably just about everybody in this room, either now or in the future. And the challenge of a passage like this is that all of us have issues! All of us come to this passage with some history – from guilt and shame, to trauma, to various addictions in this area, to any number of failures. But, there is always a value to looking at the word. There are no secrets with God; he understands what we've been through; he knows what we're struggling with right now. So, I want us to jump in with the words of Solomon in Proverbs 5,

- ¹ ***My son, give attention to my wisdom,
Incline your ear to my understanding;***
- ² ***That you may observe discretion
And your lips may reserve knowledge.***

- 3 *For the lips of an adulteress drip honey*
And smoother than oil is her speech;
4 *But in the end she is bitter as wormwood,*
Sharp as a two-edged sword.
5 *Her feet go down to death,*
Her steps take hold of Sheol.
6 *She does not ponder the path of life;*
Her ways are unstable, she does not know it.
- 7 *Now then, my sons, listen to me*
And do not depart from the words of my mouth.
8 *Keep your way far from her*
And do not go near the door of her house,
9 *Or you will give your vigor to others*
And your years to the cruel one;
10 *And strangers will be filled with your strength*
And your hard-earned goods will go to the house of an alien;
11 *And you groan at your final end,*
When your flesh and your body are consumed;
12 *And you say, "How I have hated instruction!*
And my heart spurned reproof!
13 *"I have not listened to the voice of my teachers,*
Nor inclined my ear to my instructors!
14 *"I was almost in utter ruin*
In the midst of the assembly and congregation."
- 15 *Drink water from your own cistern*
And fresh water from your own well.
16 *Should your springs be dispersed abroad,*
Streams of water in the streets?
17 *Let them be yours alone*
And not for strangers with you.
18 *Let your fountain be blessed,*
And rejoice in the wife of your youth.
19 *As a loving hind and a graceful doe,*
Let her breasts satisfy you at all times;
Be exhilarated always with her love.
- 20 *For why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulteress*
And embrace the bosom of a foreigner?
21 *For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord,*
And He watches all his paths.
22 *His own iniquities will capture the wicked,*
And he will be held with the cords of his sin.
23 *He will die for lack of instruction,*
And in the greatness of his folly he will go astray.

I. **Over the next few moments, I want us to move through this passage, and we start with a special WARNING (in verses 1-7), as Solomon warns his son about the DECEITFULNESS OF TEMPTATION.**

Sin promises more than it can deliver. And this is especially true of sexual temptation. And so, the warning is: Don't believe the marketing! Don't believe the hype! And in this case, the temptation comes through an *"adulteress."* Here at the beginning, I should probably point out that Solomon isn't really just picking on women here! This is not a message about evil women being out to get innocent and defenseless men. Instead, we need to understand (in verse 1) that Solomon is speaking to his *"son."* So, I'm assuming that if Solomon had been writing to his daughter, he would probably be warning her about the smooth-talking man. I look at this as something of a "case study." If you've taken any counseling classes, you know the importance of case studies. You learn the basics, and then you look at a case study. You take what you've learned, and you apply it to a real-life scenario. This is the real-life scenario. King Solomon is warning his son about a woman who promises one thing and delivers something quite different.

And again, in verse 3, the NASB describes her as an *"adulteress."* But you might have a footnote. Mine gives an alternate translation as a *"strange woman."* I know a lot of strange women! But this is apparently a difficult word to translate. The ESV refers to her as a *"forbidden woman."* Some commentators refer to her as the *"off-limits woman."* It's not that the woman herself is inherently evil, but she is off-limits. It is not lawful for Solomon's son to have this woman. Nevertheless, she is seducing Solomon's son (in verse 3) with lips that drip honey and with speech that is smoother than oil. She's winning him over with words. She's flattering the young man. We might imagine a slick piece of marketing.

Notice, though (in verses 4-6) that the temptation ultimately fails to deliver. The off-limits woman promises one thing but delivers something quite different. There is the temptation, the appeal, and then there is the other side of it, the disappointing results. And the lesson for us is: The temptation to live outside God's law always looks better than it really is. The temptation might come through a next-door neighbor, a co-worker, a website, a movie, a book, a boyfriend or girlfriend we're not yet married to – any number of things. But the temptation always promises more than it can deliver. What we see and hear is not usually what we get in the end. What starts out sweet and smooth ends up bitter and sharp as the seduction leads to death and destruction. The result of sexual sin is the exact opposite of what was originally promised.

Solomon's message to his son, then, is: Look past the flattering words! When you're tempted in this area, look beyond the temptation and try to understand where this is heading. When we're attracted, when we're turned on by something or someone, we need to slow down and ask: Where is this heading? Where will this end? If I do this thing, what will happen in the long run? We need to look past the smooth words to see the two-edged sword. So, first of all, when it comes to sexual sin, be aware of the swap – be aware that sin will never deliver anything close to what is originally promised. Be skeptical of the slick marketing. Watch out for the bait in the trap.

II. **And that leads us to the next paragraph here, as Solomon now warns his son very specifically about some of the terrible CONSEQUENCES.**

And notice how he starts in verse 7, *"Now then...."* In other words, based on the deceit and the swap that takes place, *"Now then,"* Solomon says, *"listen to me."* Don't even go in that direction. Knowing the danger, stay away. Don't even go near the door of her house. Don't flirt. Don't hang out there. Don't mess around with this woman. Don't be making out with her, thinking you can hold back from committing any "actual sin," thinking

you can control yourself at the last moment, but don't even go near the door. Run away! As Paul writes to the young man Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:22, ***"Now flee from youthful lusts."*** Get out of there!

And at this point, Solomon starts outlining some consequences. If you give in to sexual temptation, this is what will happen to you. And it's almost as if Solomon is thinking about what happened to his own father, King David. Greater men have fallen. This is what happened to your grandfather. And so he outlines some of what might happen when you give in.

First of all (in verse 9), you give up your strength, you give up your life. Your interests are divided. If you're married and you start going after other women, you will wear yourself out, in a sense. So, you give up your strength. Secondly (in verse 10), you give up your wealth. If you go after the off-limits woman, you lose your stuff. We may or may not have the personal experience, but most of us know that cheating on a spouse gets expensive! And the reason is: Divorce is expensive. It's been said, in fact, that divorce is one of the quickest ways for two people to get poor. Financially, nobody wins except for the lawyers. Thirdly, in addition to giving up your strength and your wealth, we also find (in verse 11) that you will give up your health, ***"And you groan at your final end, when your flesh and your body are consumed."*** That sounds terrible! But I think we understand what Solomon is saying here. Even a thousand years before Christ, people knew that sexual immorality had a way of making a person sick. And we know this today. Sin will often have some terrible physical consequences. In addition to giving up your strength, wealth, and health, Solomon also warns (in verses 12-13) that giving in to sexual sin will cause his son to give up his peace of mind as he is overwhelmed with regret. Looking back on that sin with 20/20 hindsight, many of us have lived long enough to wish we had listened to good advice. And that is what Solomon is warning about here. E. Claude Gardner was the President of Freed-Hardeman University when I first went there in January 1990. And I remember he would often close chapel with a prayer, asking God that we might live our lives so that we could look back with no regret. How important that was for college students to be thinking about. And that leads us to the last consequence, in verse 14, as Solomon warns his son about losing his reputation as the sin becomes public. What we think is private has a way of becoming public, especially for a future king. And so, King Solomon warns his son here: Be aware of the consequences.

III. We've been a bit negative up to this point, but thankfully, King Solomon gives his son some good news! We've had the warnings, we've had the consequences, and now King Solomon explains to his son that the SOLUTION to all of this, the alternative to the danger and risk is to POUR YOURSELF COMPLETELY INTO A GOD-APPROVED MARRIAGE.

God made us with the need to be with another person, and knowing the power of that drive within us, from the very beginning, God gave us the marriage relationship as a gift, as a safe and amazing and as the only responsible way to quench this thirst inside us. And Solomon does describe it as a thirst. Notice all of the sources of water in verses 15-18, ***"cistern, well, springs, streams, and a fountain."*** But notice how exclusive this is. There are some amazing thoughts here, we don't have time to go through all of this word by word, but I just want us to notice how exclusive this is. She is yours! You belong to her! She is YOUR source of water. This is the only way. This is the way God made us. The solution to satisfying this thirst we have is not necessarily that all of us just need to learn to do without water, the solution is that we need to drink water from our own well. Paul addresses this in the first six verses of 1 Corinthians 7. A husband and wife belong to each other. In marriage, we give ourselves to another person. And if we go outside the marriage relationship to quench that thirst, Solomon seems to describe it as drinking water from the street. And so the question is: Why drink from a dirty puddle out there in the street when we have full access to pure and fresh water at home? This is marriage the way God has designed it. He intends it as a relationship to be enjoyed in every way. And this is what King Solomon is

explaining to his son. He is to value the relationship with his wife. He is to treasure her. In verse 18, he is to ***“rejoice in the wife of your youth.”*** Notice: It doesn’t just say, “rejoice in your young wife.” That’s not what he’s saying here. Instead, he’s telling his son, ***“Rejoice in the wife of your youth.”*** Most people marry young and then grow old together. So, even when we are old, she will always be the wife of my youth. Rejoice in that relationship, Solomon says.

And not only that, but verse 19 is clearly about being intimate with each other, isn’t it? Proverbs 5:19 is actually in the Bible! I don’t really think of deer in that way. In our culture, maybe we think of rabbits. I don’t know. Years ago, our family was listening to a lighthearted song where the artist sings, “Maybe I think you’re cute and funny, maybe I wanna do what bunnies do with you if you know what I mean.” And after singing along, one of the kids speaks up from the back seat, “Mommy and daddy, what do bunnies do?” Oh no! But I think that’s what Solomon is getting at here in verse 19.

And notice what he says at the end of verse 19. He tells his son to ***“be exhilarated always with her love.”*** The NASB has a footnote on ***“exhilarated.”*** It refers to being intoxicated. The background of the word is “stumbling around or staggering.” And since it is commanded, this is something of a choice. Sometimes we think of love as something we fall into. But here, we choose to be intoxicated with her love. As men, we need to be so head over heels in love with our wives that we stagger! You will never hear me encourage anybody to be intoxicated, but this is the one exception! Not literally, but we as men are to be intoxicated in our love for our wives. ***“At all times,”*** he says. There’s no blessing on moderation here! Don’t hold back, he seems to be saying. Not just when you’re not tired or too busy, but treasure her as a gift from God, and enjoy the gift in every way, at all times! Nurture the relationship. Choose to love each other. Work at it. If something isn’t right, get help. And if you are ignoring your spouse, repent and change that.

IV. As we come to the end of this passage, we come to a final reminder in the last few verses as Solomon gets back to the idea that all of this matters to God – **GOD IS CONCERNED ABOUT THESE THINGS.**

In light of all that we’ve learned up to this point, Solomon is asking (in verse 20), “Why get all excited about the off-limits woman?” [paraphrased]. Besides, he says (in verse 21), ***“...the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He watches all his paths.”*** In other words, God is concerned about our behavior, and God sees. Especially with sexual sin, we might think we’re keeping things quiet, we might think we’re covering our tracks pretty well, but God sees all of it. God even knows what we’re thinking. Remember: In Matthew 5:28, Jesus said that, ***“everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”*** God knows, and he cares. But it’s not just judgment in the next life: The other danger comes at the end with another reminder that this sin in particular is something of a trap. We get captured and held down with the cords of our sin. We get trapped, but we’re never really satisfied. It’s an endless cycle. Ironically, we actually see this in King Solomon. Even with the 1000 women in his life, he’s still restless, always looking for more. There was a point in his life when Solomon was miserable. ***“Vanity of vanity, all is vanity.”*** And God cares about this. He doesn’t want this for us. But instead, God wants us to enjoy what he’s given to us.

Conclusion:

One thing that isn’t addressed here is what to do when we sin in this area. For that, we head to the New Testament, starting with that list of sins that Al read for us earlier from 1 Corinthians 6. The Christians in Corinth had quite the past (fornicators, adulterers, homosexuals, among everything else), but they were forgiven; they

were washed, they were sanctified, they were justified. They turned from those sins, and those sins were completely washed away when they were buried with Christ in baptism. The temptations were still there, but they turned away, ***“such were some of you,”*** Paul says.

So, if we feel trapped or if our marriage isn't what it needs to be, what do we actually do? I would make just a few comments here at the end: First of all, **LISTEN TO GOD** on this issue. This past Wednesday evening, one of our young women made a great comment in class. I'm just paraphrasing, but basically, if we're stuck and sin and don't know what to do: Before SPEAKING to God about it, we really need to make sure we are LISTENING to God about it. That is absolutely what James was getting at in James 1. With reference to God and his word, we are to be ***“quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.”*** So, listen to God. Let's make sure we really understand God's will on this. If I'm married, I need to know what God wants out of me. I need to read Ephesians 5 and 1 Peter 3. If I'm single, I need to really understand how God wants me to live outside of a marriage relationship. I need to read the last half of 1 Corinthians 7 as well as consider some of the awesome examples of single people in the Bible (Joseph, and Daniel, and Paul, and Jesus, among so many others). And if I'm having some issues in marriage, I need to recommit to getting back to the ideal. I need to do what God's book is telling me to do. And that might be hard, but we need to reevaluate, and we need to take steps in that direction.

And then secondly, if I'm overwhelmed with temptation, if I'm enslaved to sin in some way, I need to take some concrete steps to **ESCAPE**. 1 Corinthians 10:13 reminds us that with every temptation there will always be a way of escape. It's up to us to find that way of escape and take it. Break off a relationship. Whack the internet. Get a new job. Move. Stop taking calls from somebody. I don't know what your issue might be, but the Lord himself talked about ripping our eyes out, didn't he? Ask God to deliver you from temptation, and then take steps to make a break. Get help. Be accountable to somebody. Don't get burdened down by the past, but look to Jesus. And that reminds us that Jesus dealt with some people in some terrible situations – some were sexually active without being married (John 4), some were prostitutes, some were adulterers (John 8), but in each case, Jesus is more concerned with what they could become than with where they had been or with what they had done in the past. So, if you've fallen or if you are trapped right now, please know that God can make it right. This is not the unforgiveable sin. Pray the prayer that David prayed after his sin with Bathsheba in Psalm 51, ***“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! ... Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”*** And this is where we leave it today. Ask for mercy. Call out to God for help and forgiveness. Peter describes baptism as ***“an appeal to God for a good conscience”*** (1 Peter 3:21).

If we can help in some way, if we can pray about a challenge you're facing, we hope you will let us know. If you are ready to obey the gospel, let's talk after worship today, or if you're ready right now, come let me know as we sing this next song. Let's stand and sing...

To comment on this lesson: fourlakeschurch@gmail.com