

The Price and Lure of the Adulteress

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Date: 10 May 2020

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[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, we thank you that you speak to us as a loving Father.

That you do not shy away from speaking the hard truth to us because you love us you seek our good.

And Lord, this passage is a sobering passage. Even a frightful passage.

But Lord, we pray that as we cherish the word you have given us, that you would ignite or even reignite our zeal, our passion for your glory.

And that that would make us faithful in our relationships. That they would keep us and guard us from lust and adultery.

[1 : 32] And that we would be freshly reminded of the great price that you paid to reclaim your adulterous bride, us, your church.

So now lead us and speak to us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. We're in Proverbs chapter 6, verse 20 to chapter 7, verse 27.

I'll read out loud for us. My son, keep your father's commandment and forsake not your mother's teaching.

Bind them on your heart always. Tie them around your neck. When you walk, they will lead you. When you lie down, they will watch over you.

And when you awake, they will talk with you. For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light. And the reproofs of discipline are the way of life.

[2 : 54] To preserve you from the evil woman, from the smooth tongue of the adulteress. Do not desire her beauty in your heart. And do not let her capture you with her eyelashes.

For the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread. But a married woman hunts down a precious life. Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned?

Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched? So is he who goes into his neighbor's wife. None who touches her will go unpunished.

People do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his appetite when he is hungry. But if he is caught, he will pay sevenfold. He will give all the goods of his house.

He who commits adultery lacks sense. He who does it destroys himself. He will get wounds and dishonor and his disgrace will not be wiped away.

[3 : 55] For jealousy makes the man furious and he will not spare when he takes revenge. He will accept no compensation. He will refuse though you multiply gifts. My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you.

Keep my commandments and live. Keep my teaching as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers. Write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, you are my sister.

And call in sight your intimate friend to keep you from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words. For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice and I have seen among the simple I have perceived among the youths a young man lacking sense passing along the street near her corner taking the road to her house in the twilight in the evening at the time of night and darkness.

And behold, the woman meets him dressed as a prostitute wily of heart. She is loud and wayward. Her feet do not stay at home. Now in the street now in the market and at every corner she lies in wait.

She seizes him and kisses him and with bold face she says to him, I have to offer sacrifices and today I paid my vows. So now I have come out to meet you to seek you eagerly and I have found you.

[5 : 22] I have spread my couch with coverings, colored linens from Egyptian linen. I perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love till morning.

Let us delight ourselves with love. For my husband is not at home. He has gone on a long journey. He took a bag of money with him. At full moon he will come home. With much seductive speech she persuades him.

With her smooth talk she compels him. All at once he follows her as an ox goes to the slaughter.

Whereas a stag is caught fast till an arrow pierces its liver.

As a bird rushes into a snare he does not know that it will cost him his life. And now O sons listen to me and be attentive to the words of my mouth.

Let not your heart turn aside to her ways. Do not stray into her paths. For many a victim has she laid low and all her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is the way to shield going down to the chambers of death.

[6 : 31] This is God's holy and authoritative word. If someone were to compile a list of men and women whose lives and careers have been ruined by adultery that list would be too long to count.

I still remember the Ashley Madison data leak from 2015. Some of you might remember that. when the website that promotes extramarital affairs was hacked.

And the hackers leaked names of 30 million people who had used the website. And some of the leaked data included other personally identifying information like home addresses and search histories, credit card records.

people and the leaked names included politicians, priests, military members, civil servants, and celebrities. Many resignations and divorces and in some cases even suicides followed.

And one of the people affected was a pastor and a seminary professor who couldn't overcome the deep shame and fear that came with the exposure.

[7 : 44] So he left a heart-wrenching apology to his wife and took his own life. That's what Satan thrives on. He promises pleasure without pain.

He promises sin without death. But Proverbs 620-727 that we just read exposes his malicious lies.

Chapter 6 tells us the price of the adulteress and chapter 7 tells us the lure of the adulteress.

And the lure of the adulteress is such that a young man liking sense falls headlong into her trap hook, line, and sinker. And how can we be fortified against this dangerous temptation?

This passage teaches us that we should treasure up the commandments of God so that they keep us from the trap of the adulteress. And if you're single, don't tune it out thinking that this doesn't apply to you.

Jesus said in Matthew 5 27-28 you have heard that it was said you shall not commit adultery but I tell you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

[8 : 58] Physical adultery is often preceded by heart adultery and this passage has helpful insights to keep us from both. And so first let's look at the price of the adulteress in chapter 6.

It says in verses 20 and 21 Throughout the book of Proverbs the author frequently assumes the voice of the father and equates his voice with the commandments of God himself because he is a spokesperson for God.

He's relaying the commandments of God to the future generations. But instructing a child was not an exclusive responsibility of the father. It's especially appropriate to note today on Mother's Day that the teaching of the mother is mentioned here also as it is in two other places in Proverbs.

It says forsake not your mother's teaching. The saying that was popularized in the 1940s to recognize the often unheralded contributions of women is true.

Behind every great man there is a great woman. 1 Timothy 6 9-10 teaches that an elderly woman who desires to devote herself fully to praying for the church and serving the church in that way while receiving full financial care and provision from the church that they need to be qualified and that their qualification is that they need to have a reputation for good works.

[10 : 30] This is 1 Timothy 6 9-10. It then lists several examples of what having a good reputation for good works looks like. It lists things like showing hospitality washing the feet of the saints and caring for the afflicted.

But before all of those things what heads the list is this surprising item that she has brought up children. Being a mother bringing up children teaching your children is a good commendable God-honoring work worthy of praise and recognition.

It is a difficult work a sacrificial work a worthy work. And since the father and mother and you here have done a good job of teaching their children the father tells the son to bind their teaching on his heart always and to tie them around his neck.

This is a figurative expression for a constant devotion. Some of you might remember from the 90s it was really popular in the 90s these WWJD bracelets What Would Jesus Do bracelets I wore them in middle school proudly in my school and it's kind of like that but in a more figurative and less literal sense we are to keep the commandments of God always near our minds and dear to our hearts we should read God's word we should meditate on God's word we should memorize God's word I had a zoom call with one of our church members this week who had a wall of truth in the room with whole bunch of sticky notes with these truths from scripture and Bible verses to serve as a constant reminder to live with the life giving truths of God in mind let me ask you what does your mind wander to is your mind full of

God's word or is it full of the world what does your heart treasure is what do you love what stirs up your soul what ignites your passion is it to know and to do the will of God or is it the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is it the commandments of God our Father have you bound those things in your heart have you tied it around your neck and here's why that's important it says in verse 22 when you walk they will lead you when you lie down they will watch over you and when you awake they will talk with you this verse personifies the commandments of God these commandments will and what a comforting thought whether you're active or sedentary whether you're outdoors or indoors at home whether you're sleeping or awake the word of God is a constant and faithful companion it can lead guard and counsel you so who wouldn't want such a steady and reliable companion for it continues in verse 23 the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life here's why we should treasure up the commandments of

[13 : 51] God for they are a lamp and a light they are the way of life we will never drive in unlit roads without our headlights on but God's word is the lamp it is the light for the world of life we would never travel to an unknown region without a map well God's word and its reproofs of discipline are the way of life it shows you the way that leads to abundant life and ultimately eternal life right the first thing that people who wear glasses like I do grab in the morning when they wake up is their glasses because they can't see anything without them it's God's word that helps us to see so we should treasure up the commandments of God and there are countless benefits to treasuring God's word but this passage has one very specific purpose in mind it says in verse 24 to preserve you from the evil woman from the smooth tongue of the adulteress if you are a woman simply flip the gender of the words around to fit your vantage point the warning applies to you as well the

ESV the English standard version that we are using translates it as evil woman but the new international version translates the same word as neighbor's wife wife this variation in translation stems from the fact that the original Hebrew manuscripts of the book of Proverbs have no spaces between consonants and they don't have any vowels so you have to rely entirely on context to supply the vowels so the vowels depending on what vowels you supply produces some minor discrepancies that do not substantially affect the meaning of the text of scripture and in this case depending on what vowels you supply can mean evil woman or neighbor's wife and I think neighbor's wife is a better translation because it's paralleled by the word adulterous which literally is foreign or strange woman in Hebrew it fits the running theme that we've observed in chapters 5 6 and 7 of that warning about meddling in the affairs of strangers of our neighbors and also because later in verse 29 the adultery is sinful and evil indeed but the main reason why we need to be preserved from the adulteress is not because she's particularly evil but because she belongs to another as we will see in the rest of chapter 6 and we must be guarded from her because she is alluring she has a smooth tongue which is a reference to her sly and sensuous speech and then verses 25 to 35 the father dives into his dire warnings he says in verse 25 do not desire her beauty in your heart and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes proverbs uses the word beauty exclusively to refer to outward beauty to the physical appearance and this is confirmed by the parallel eyelashes or literally the eyes as the

NIV translates it and because in the ancient Near Eastern culture eyes were often the focal point of feminine beauty sparkling eyes were a prized attribute of beautiful woman in the ancient Near Eastern world and so in Genesis 29 17 in describing Leah who was ugly compared to her younger sister Rachel Bible describes her as having weak eyes right an article entitled looking and loving

published in the Journal of Research and Personality made the observation that the simple prolonged eye contact alone increases significantly the feelings of passionate love between two complete strangers this study merely confirmed what Solomon the principal author of Proverbs already affirmed nearly 3,000 years earlier the and the way to do that is not by avoiding eye contact but by guarding our hearts we are told not to desire her beauty in our heart this forms a contrast with verse 21 which taught us to bind God's commandments on our heart.

If we fortify our hearts with the beauty and the goodness of God's commandments, we will not be captured by the beauty of a neighbor's wife. The gaze of the adulteress will be unable to pierce our hearts.

Verse 26 and following supply the reasons why we ought to guard ourselves against the adulteress. Four, the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread, but a married woman hunts down a precious life.

[18 : 57] This is the price of the adulteress. The price of a prostitute is a loaf, but the price of an adulteress is a life. The author is not encouraging us to seek out prostitutes instead of committing adultery.

Sexual immorality of all shapes and form are prohibited throughout scripture, and hiring a prostitute for sex is explicitly condemned in 1 Corinthians chapter 6.

Solomon wants us to avoid both prostitution and adultery. He's merely noting that sleeping with a married woman has far worse consequences than sleeping with a prostitute.

In terms of economic cost, the prostitute is actually more expensive. The adulteress is free. But in terms of the physical and social cost, the adulteress is far more costly than a prostitute.

Adultery destroys marriages. It wrecks homes. It even takes lives. In verses 27 to 35, the father then explains that this punishment for adultery is both inescapable and interminable.

[20 : 13] It has no end. The devastating consequence of adultery leaves no exits and has no end. First, it's inescapable. It says in verses 27 to 29, The obvious answer to these rhetorical questions is no.

You cannot carry fire or walk on hot coals without being burned. Likewise, none who touches his neighbor's wife will go unpunished. In Hebrew, the words for man, wife, and fire all are sibilant. They all have S sounds. They're very similar in sounds. So when you hear that sound association between the man, wife, and fire, whenever it establishes the association, the connection between the sin and the consequence and the punishment even more closely and tightly.

So whenever you feel tempted to lust after a neighbor's wife or a husband, think about fire. That's the association that the author of Proverbs is trying to make for us.

Whenever you feel a spark or a flame rising up inside you for a neighbor's wife or a husband, don't think of metaphorical fire. Think of real fire, fire that burns and consumes and scorches and leaves scars and kills.

[21 : 43] And don't for a moment think that you can get away with it. That no one will find out. God sees everything and he is the ultimate judge overall.

And his word declares that none who touches his neighbor's wife will go unpunished. None. And the adulterer has no excuse. There is no mitigating circumstance that makes adultery more acceptable. It says in verses 30 to 32, If you steal to satisfy your hunger, it's still wrong.

And if you're caught, you will be held accountable. However, at least people will pity you. But not so with the adulterer. He who commits adultery lacks sense.

He who does it destroys himself. No one will pity you. Instead, they will say that you destroyed yourself. The thief might end up losing everything he has, all of his possessions. But the adulterer will lose his life itself.

[23 : 03] Adultery is senseless and its destructive consequences inescapable. And not only is the ruin inescapable, it's also interminable. It says in verse 33, He will get wounds and dishonor and his disgrace will not be wiped away.

In much of the ancient world, adultery was legally punishable, either by whipping or by the death penalty. So the adulterer might literally end up with wounds and literally lose his life.

And the word wound is a noun form of the same word touch that was used in verse 29. So this wordplay reinforces the inevitable consequence of adultery.

Whoever touches a married woman sexually will be touched with violence. But the physical punishment is not the end of it. He will also get dishonor.

There is no way to make restitution for adultery. Because you can't undo it. You can't repay a wrong spouse. The wounds and dishonor and disgrace that befall the adulterer are therefore permanent. [24 : 11] They will not be wiped away. It will be a permanent blotch on your record. And here's why the punishment is so severe. It says in verses 34 to 35, You can put a price tag on all of your property.

Their loss can be compensated. But your wife, your husband, their loyalty, their affection, these are priceless things, and there is no adequate compensation for their loss. Even if you try to appease the cuckold, the grieved husband, with bribes, his jealous anger will not be pacified, and he will exact revenge.

We are to consider this high price of the adulteress and treasure up the commandments of God. And having spoken of the price, now the stage turns in chapter 7 to the lure of the adulteress in chapter 7.

The tactics used by the adulteress to capture foolish men, to trap them. But before he does, he reiterates the importance of treasuring up the commandments of God again in verses 1 to 5.

[25 : 36] As I read it, please listen for the repetition of the word keep. It says, My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you. Keep my commandments and live.

Keep my teaching as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers. Write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, You are my sister and call inside your intimate friend to keep you from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words.

The repetition of the word keep emphasizes the main point of this passage that the only way to be kept from the adulteress is to keep the commandments of God in our hearts.

If you want to be guarded from the adulteress, you must guard God's word within you. The commandments of God should be cherished and guarded like the apple of your eye that are so delicate and essential, important that we protect.

It's instinctive, right? I think that's why it's so hard. I don't know how people who wear contacts do it. I can't keep my eyes open even when I try because it's our instinct to protect it.

[26 : 48] Likewise, we're to keep, guard, God's word in our hearts as the apple of our eye. Verses four to five contrast befriending wisdom with befriending the adulteress.

It says, Say to wisdom, you are my sister. Call inside your intimate friend or your relative. And the word forbidden woman is once again, literally it means strange woman.

It's a reference to the woman that does not belong to your family, the person that is not your wife, but your neighbor's wife, a strange woman. If you want to be protected from the seduction of the strange woman, make wisdom your familial and familiar woman.

If you want to remain estranged from the adulteress, make God's wisdom familiar to yourself. And as a cautionary tale, the father uses an example of a foolish man who succumbs to the lure of the adulteress in the rest of the chapter.

He says in verses six to eight, For at the window of my house, I have looked out through my lattice and I've seen among the simple, I perceived among the youths, a young man lacking sense, passing along the street near her corner, taking the road to her house in the twilight, in the evening, at the time of night and darkness.

[28 : 10] These verses contrast the father who is looking out from the window of my house, from the senseless young man who takes the road to her house.

The father is safe where every faithful, stable man should be a knight at his own house. But the foolish young man is roaming the streets near her house.

He's at the wrong place. Earlier in Proverbs chapter five, verse eight warned us, Keep your way far from the adulteress and do not go near the door of her house.

We're supposed to stay far away from the adulteress. We are not even to go near the door of her house, let alone go in. Ray helpfully used two weeks ago the illustration of Joseph in Genesis chapter 39.

He literally fled the advances of Potiphar's wife and he refused even to be in her presence because she was trying to seduce him. Likewise, we're to flee the temptress.

[29 : 19] Maybe you don't outright look at pornography, but are you going near it? Are you looking at certain Facebook or Instagram profiles where you know you will find pictures of scantily clad people?

Are you watching suggestive or sensuous videos on YouTube? The stage warns us, Don't even go near her house.

Is there a co-worker that is throwing inappropriate gazes in your direction or making overt advances toward you? Don't go wandering near his or her cubicle to indulge your curiosity.

Stay far away from her. Transfer to another department. Get another office. Maybe get even another job. Don't even go near her house.

Stay in your house with your spouse. Are you traveling? Don't go to the nude beach. Don't wander around the swimming pool trying to check out who is there.

[30 : 29] Don't go to the bar alone. Ask the hotel staff to disconnect your cable or remove the TV from your room beforehand if necessary. Don't even go near her house.

Not only was this young man in the wrong place, he was also there at the wrong time. It says in verse 90, He was taking the road to her house in the twilight, in the evening, at the time of night and darkness.

Notice that repetition of words that suggest night time and darkness. It's the opposite of following the commandments of God which was described in chapter 6, verse 23 as a lamp and a light.

As John chapter 3, verses 19 to 20 put it, People love the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light lest his works should be exposed.

What does this mean for us? Secrecy. Shame. Hiding from others. Shirking responsibility. Fleeing accountability.

[31 : 38] Finding cover at night. This is the environment that incubates sin. We are to avoid such darkness. We are to instead live in the light.

Confess our sins to one another. Expose our sins to the light of Christ. Be transparent. Be vulnerable. Seek accountability from one another. In such an environment, in the light, sin suffocates.

It withers away. When you're in the wrong place at the wrong time, it's no surprise that you encounter the adulteress. Verses 10 to 12 describe her this way.

And behold, the woman meets him dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart. She is loud and wayward. Her feet do not stay at home. Now in the street, now in the market, and at every corner, she lies in wait.

As if she had been waiting to pounce on him. It says, behold, she's just right there. All of a sudden, the woman meets him. And she's dressed as a prostitute, probably revealing clothes intended to seduce.

[32 : 42] And it says, she is wily of heart. She is not genuine. She's not authentic. She hides the true intentions of her heart. She is loud and wayward, both in the sounds she makes and in the places she goes.

She is out of bounds. She is disruptive. Her feet do not stay at home. Now in the street, now in the market, and every corner, she lies in wait. Unlike the father who was home, this woman is never home.

She's not an industrious woman who works busily at home. She is rather a busy body, scurrying about to meddle in the affairs of others. Instead of the wife who is praised in 1 Peter 3, verse 4, for possessing the imperishable beauty, imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, the adulteress is loud and wayward.

Unlike godly young women who are commanded in Titus 2, verses 3-5, and 1 Timothy 5, verses 11-14, to love their husbands and children and to manage their households, the adulteress' feet do not stay at home.

She does not love her husband and children. She's not dedicated to her household. And the adulteress' actions and speech in verses 13-21, provide uncanny insight into how the temptations of lust and adultery function.

[34 : 07] If I could summarize the insights, I can summarize it into four things. First, the adulteress creates a pretext. Second, the adulteress appeals to pride.

Third, the adulteress entices with pleasure. And fourth, she promises impunity. This is her tactic.

First, it says in verses 13-15, that the adulteress seizes him and kisses him, and with bold face she says to him, I had to offer sacrifices, and today I paid my vows.

So now I have come out to meet you. She's first creating a pretext. She claims to be a religious person and claims that she has made a vow to offer a sacrifice to her deity and that today she has finally fulfilled her vow.

Now what does that have to do with anything here? The Canaanite fertility cult required fellowship sacrifices where the worshiper sacrifices an animal and shares a meal with his or her deity.

Now a female who offers such sacrifice as a part of that communal meal were required to have sexual intercourse with the male partner. This is the Canaanite fertility cult.

[35 : 26] So she claims that she needs this young man. However, since the adulteress has been described already in verse 5 as having smooth words and in verse 10 as being wily of heart, I'm inclined to think that this is merely a pretext and not a genuine religious concern.

The seductress creates a pretext for intimacy. Think about how people might do that. Hey, I've been really depressed and lonely lately. My husband has been traveling too much for work.

He doesn't care about me at all. Hey, do you want to come over to my house and keep me company and have a drink? I could really use some company, friendship.

Or someone else might say, well, we've been so overworked by our boss, haven't we? Do you want to go to a spa together this weekend to relax, let off steam? The adulteress first creates a pretext.

Second, she appeals to pride. Look at how the adulteress butters up the young man before eating him alive. She says, I have come to meet you, to seek you eagerly, and I have found you.

[36 : 47] She's saying, I need a male partner to complete my sacrifice, and you, you handsome hunk of a man. You are just the right person. I've been eagerly looking for you.

And finally, I have found you. Can you imagine how special this young man felt? She's appealing to his vanity. You are special.

What woman can refuse you? Why be tied down by someone who doesn't appreciate you? Oh, but I appreciate you. I know your true value. This is far from the truth, of course.

There is, in fact, nothing especially impressive about this young man except he is dim-witted. And his adulteress is anything but discriminating. We were told in verse 12, now in the street, now in the market, in every corner she lies in wait.

Later it says in verse 26, many a victim has she laid low, and all her slain are a mighty throng. This adulteress is not discriminating. She's not picky. She is everywhere, and she solicits everyone who is foolish enough to come near her.

[37 : 57] We should be wary of flatterers in general, but let us beware, lest we duped by the adulteress. So she appeals to pride, and her third tactic is that she entices with pleasure.

She knows that human beings are creatures of desire, of the senses. So she says in verses 16-18, I have spread my couch with coverings, colored linens from Egyptian linen.

I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love till morning. Let us delight ourselves with love. The adulteress arouses the man's senses in order to take advantage of him.

She has already seized him and kissed him in verse 13. Now she entices him with even more pleasure. The couch is parallel to bed. It refers not to where you sit, but to where you sleep, where you recline.

And she has covered her bed with soft, luxurious, imported linen from Egypt for tactile pleasure. Soft.

[39 : 02] She has perfumed her bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon for olfactory pleasure for her to delight the smell. These are spices that are mentioned in Song of Songs chapter 4, verse 14 as arousing romantic love.

She continues, let us take our fill. Literally, that means drink our fill of love till morning. Let us delight ourselves with love. She's now even offering gustatory pleasure, taste, even if it's only euphemism for sexual intercourse.

In short, the adulteress arouses all of the man's sensual desires. We need to learn to control, to have self-control, to control these desires if we are not to be overcome by the tactics of the adulteress.

And fourth, finally, the adulteress promises impunity. She says in verses 9 to 20, for my husband is not at home. He has gone on a long journey.

He took a bag of money with him at full moon and he will come home. In other words, she's saying, you have nothing to worry about because my husband's not home and he won't be home for a long

time.

[40 : 14] I saw him take a full bag of money, which means he took a lot of provisions, which suggests a long journey. He won't be back till full moon, which is probably referring to 14 days if she made her sacrifices in new moon.

But this too is a lie since the father already told us in verse 29 that none who touches her will go unpunished. And verse 34 warned us that the jealousy in chapter 6, verse 34, jealousy makes a man furious and he will not spare when he takes revenge.

But that's the devil's deceptive tactic, isn't it? He always makes us think that we can get away with it. No one will see. No one will know. In the secret of her apartment, in the secret of your private browser, no one will know.

But all these things have a way of being revealed. It's just a matter of time because the all-seeing and all-knowing God will hold you to account. And notice how blunt and shameless this adulteress is.

She plainly says that her husband is coming back. She's implying that, hey, by the time she comes back, you better be out of here. She's not offering this young man love and commitment.

[41 : 37] She's blatantly soliciting casual sex without commitment. But that, too, appeals to the folly of the young man. Not only is this adulteress promising impunity, she also guarantees immunity from any sort of responsibility.

You mean I can have you without giving you anything? You mean I can use you for pleasure without taking any responsibility to take care of you?

In this way, with much seductive speech, she persuades him. With her smooth talk, she compels him. It says in verse 21, The young man is by this point completely taken.

It says in verses 22-23, All at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, whereas a stag is caught fast till an arrow pierces its liver. As a bird rushes into a snare, he does not know that it will cost him his life.

Already in chapter 6, verses 25-26, the sage used words like hunt and capture to refer to what the adulteress does. And here he is expanding that image.

[42 : 44] The adulteress is a predator and the foolish man who engages her is a prey. Men who commit adultery sometimes describe the thrill of the hunt.

They say that there is something exciting about pursuing a forbidden woman, of stealing a woman from a neighbor. But the wise man knows that the feeling of hunting is an illusion.

You are actually the prey being hunted. Your supposed supposed conquest is actually your fatal defeat.

Like an ox going to the slaughter. Like a stag caught and pierced by an arrow. Bird rushing into a snare. The adulteress has set a death trap.

And the father closes his lesson on the price and lure of the adulteress the same way he opened his teaching by exhorting them, his sons, to heed his words. He says in verses 24-27, And now, O sons, listen to me and be attentive to the words of my mouth.

[43 : 59] Let not your heart turn aside to her ways. Do not stray into her paths. For many a victim has she laid low and all her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is the way to shield going down to the chambers of death.

The adulteress's bedchamber of pleasure is in reality a foyer that leads to the chamber of death. Far from being her only extramarital lover, she has laid low and slain a mighty throng of virile men. And throughout chapter 7, the father has emphasized the importance of words, hasn't he? He said in verse 1, My son, keep my words. And in verse 2, keep my teaching. He says again in verse 24, Listen to me, be attentive to my words.

And this father's teaching on the one hand is contrasted with the seductive speech, literally seductive teaching and smooth talk of the adulteress in verse 21.

So we are faced with the choice of listening to the father, his teaching, or the adulterer's teaching. These competing words are always circulating around us.

[45 : 12] They're really actually competing worldviews. And we have to choose to believe the commandments of God. Because the reality is underneath every sin, there is unbelief.

Behind every sin, behind every adultery, there is the lie of the enemy that we have believed instead of the word of God. The lie that God is withholding something desirable and good from us that you should take into your own hands.

the lie that we can enjoy sin and escape its inevitable consequences of death. We must expose these lies with the truths of God.

We must treasure up the commandments of God so that they keep us from the trap of the adulteress. But what are we to do since we have already fallen for the trap of the adulteress? What are we to do when we are already in the foyer that leads to the chamber of death?

Throughout the book of Hosea, God compares himself to an aggrieved husband and his people to an adulterous wife.

[46 : 24] He contends with his people in the book of Hosea that in spite of having made a covenant with him, that they have whored after other gods.

That's what we have done to God. all of humanity belongs to what Jesus described in Mark 8, 38 as an adulterous generation.

We are all guilty, deserving of death and condemnation. And as Proverbs 6, verse 35 said, the husband who was cheated on will accept no compensation.

The word that is translated compensation is the same Hebrew word that is translated in multiple places throughout the Old Testament as ransom. Ransom is the price of redemption.

It is the payment for wrongdoing to settle grievances of the injured party. But there is no adequate ransom for adultery.

[47 : 33] And the same is true for spiritual adultery. Only punishment that suffices is death. How do you put a price tag on the loyalty of your spouse, on the love of your spouse?

How do you put a price tag on faithfulness? And we have been unfaithful to God. There is no ransom that can pay for that sin.

But in that same book of Hosea, when God is indicting His people of adultery, in chapter 11 verses 8 to 9, God also says this. This was our assurance of pardon this morning.

God says, How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Adma? How can I treat you like Zeboim?

My heart recoils within me. My compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my burning anger. I will not again destroy Ephraim, for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst.

[48 : 46] And I will not come in wrath. Even as our Holy God is repulsed by our adultery, His very heart recoils within Him.

It draws back from severe judgment. Even as our Holy God, our just God, is burning with righteous anger and wrath against sinners, His compassion at the same time grows warm and tender.

And God says that He does this, for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath. God, we don't deserve this.

It is like a man to be vengeful and wrathful and to be severe in judgment, but it is like God to be merciful, slow to anger, forgiving, wickedness, and rebellion.

And yes, God is holy. Yes, God is just, and His judgment day will come, but His heart of hearts, in His heart of hearts, He recoils, He melts with compassion for undeserving sinners like us, and so the Lord God Himself makes a way for our redemption, and He sends His only Son, the Son of God, to take on human flesh, to become the Son of Man.

[50 : 18] And it says in Matthew 20, 28, that even the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.

Jesus, our bridegroom, the one we were betrothed to, the husband we cheated on, takes upon Himself the penalty of death that we deserve for our infidelity.

and He dies on the cross for our sins. And that's why He says in Ephesians 5, 25 to 27, husband, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

our Heavenly Father paid the bright price of our redemption and our eternal bridegroom Jesus Christ was the ransom price He paid.

And it is through this wonderful news that we call the gospel that we are sanctified as God's people, the church, that we are prepared for our heavenly glorious wedding day when we as God's people will be presented to Jesus in splendor without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.