

Proverbs 7 – The Seductive Adulteress

James describes the process of temptation common to us all, in terms of a man being seduced by a woman:

“every man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (Jas. 1:14-15).

Just like a harlot woman seducing a man, lust entices him, and conceives a child of sin, and the end of the entire process once the work has been “finished” is “death”. In our Proverbs reading for today, we have these principles illustrated for us. Again, we have a seductive adulteress leading a simpleton into sin, and the end result is death: “her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death” (Prov. 7:27). Today, we shall consider this chapter therefore, with the view to learning how to avoid being so tempted and enticed, that we might therefore escape the wiles of an adulteress.

The chapter commences by defining the audience: “**my Son**, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee” (Prov. 7:1). But it is evident that there is more to this chapter than Solomon’s fatherly advice to Rehoboam. A similar expression is used in chapter 3: “**My son**, despise not the chastening of Yahweh; neither be weary of his correction” (Prov. 3:11-12). And this is cited in the New Testament, to prove how that Yahweh as a loving Father treats his children: “ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh **unto you** as unto children, **My son**, despise not the chastening of the Lord ...” (Heb. 12:5). It is evident therefore, that in Proverbs, the Father is Yahweh, and the sons/children are His Children. It is therefore a message directly addressed to the Sons of the Living God!

The chapter commences with the admonition to retain the Words of God within our heart:

“My son, **keep my words**, and lay up my commandments with thee. Keep my commandments **and live**: and my law as the apple of thine eye” (Prov. 7:1).

Notice the importance here of keeping the commandments of the Lord – it is necessary in order to “live”. The same theme occurs elsewhere: “... blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it” (Lu. 11:28). Again, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand” (Rev. 1:3). Indeed, the keeping of Divine commandments demonstrates the quality of love: “... whoso keepeth his word in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him” (1 Jno. 2:5).

By contrast, the way of the adulteress woman leads only to death: “her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death” (Prov. 7:27). Wisdom is a defence, and provides a protection from the foolish woman, lest we be beguiled by her.

But the Words of God are of no use to us, unless they are written into our hearts: “Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart” (vs 3). This verse is alluded to by Paul, speaking of the faithfulness of the Corinthian ecclesia:

“... ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart” (2 Cor. 3:3).

So it is that words written in ink, or engraved into stone, are of no value, unless they become translated into the fleshy tables of heart – and this is what it means for the “Word” to be “made flesh” (Jno 1:14), which we see pre-eminently in the Lord Jesus Christ.

A SPIRITUAL FAMILY

The chapter continues to describe how that a son of God develops a spiritual family around him: “Say unto Wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman ...” (vs 4). By contrast to this, the people of Judah instead developed a carnal family, with Israel, and Sodom as their sisters: “thine elder sister is Samaria, she and her daughters that dwell at thy left hand: and thy younger sister, that dwelleth at thy right hand is Sodom and her daughters” (Eze. 16:46).

There is also another sense in which we develop a spiritual family: those of like precious faith become our associates, and our brethren and sisters. The Lord himself said this: “he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother” (Mat. 12:49-50). The Truth brings together men and women who ordinarily would have had nothing to do with each other, yet for those who have Wisdom as their sister, they collectively comprise the family of God.

THE ADULTERESS

After describing the virtues of laying up the Word of God in our heart, the Father proceeds to describe the seductive adulteress. He beheld out of the window of his house, a simple man who is seduced by the subtle flatteries of the harlot. He is walking in the “in the evening, in the black and dark night, and, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart” (vs 9-10). Whatever the attire of an harlot is, it contrasts with how the Father’s daughters should adorn themselves:

“whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Pet. 3:3-4).

Rather than to present an appearance that panders to the flesh, the women of God dress modestly, arraying themselves with the ornaments of “a meek and quiet spirit”. This is what will give them approval “in the sight of God” – Whose is the only opinion that matters!

By contrast to a “meek and quiet spirit”, the harlot woman “is loud and stubborn” (Prov. 7:11). It is written in the book of Ecclesiastes that “the words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools” (Eccl. 9:17). So it is written of the Lord: “He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets” (Mat. 12:19, also Isa. 42:2). Elijah was shown the power of a still, small voice, and the speech of the Sons of God should also follow the same pattern: “the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the Truth” (2 Tim. 3:24-25).

When she encounters the Simpleton, the indiscreet woman kissed him and attempted to beguile him by her words. Her speech has a smattering of truth, in that she purports to be following the sacrifices of the Mosaic Law, and uses the language of the Truth:

“... she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, **I have peace offerings** with me; this day have I **paid my vows**. Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face” (Prov. 7:13-15)

Having made acquaintance with the man, she invites him to share a meal with him, a meal comprised of peace offerings. Being the only altar-offering which the offeror themselves could eat, this was a meal of fellowship! The warning of Paul is relevant here:

“But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be **a fornicator**, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; **with such an one no not to eat**” (1 Cor. 5:11).

The apocalyptic harlot woman – the Roman religious system – is of the same ilk. She uses the language of the Truth, and teaches a combination of truth and error. Claiming to speak and teach the principles of Scripture, she beguiles the undiscerning with her flatteries. But there can be no fellowship or friendship with her:

“ye **adulterers and adulteresses**, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity against God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world **is the enemy of God**” (Jas. 4:4).

Again:

“... if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever” (1 Jno. 2:15-17).

To be joined to the strange woman, is to commit adultery against the One to whom we are betrothed. The adulteress has a husband, but he is temporarily absent:

“Come, let us take our fill of love until the morning: let us solace ourselves with loves. For the goodman is not at home, he is gone a long journey: he hath taken a bag of money with him, and will come home at the day appointed” (Prov. 7:18-19).

Rather than to patiently wait for his return, the woman turns to another, to engage in an adulterous relationship with the one she has deceived. It would appear that these words are partly alluded to by the Lord in his parable of Luke 19: there he describes how “a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return” (Lu. 19:12).

The situation is similar in some respects to Joseph and Potipher’s wife. With her fair speech, she enticed him to yield. In the absence of the goodman of the house, she “cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me”. And she did so from day to day: “And it came to pass, as she spake to Joseph day by day, that he hearkened not unto her, to lie by her, or to be with her”. Joseph was no simpleton, and refused her advances. But on a certain day, she sought to force herself upon him: “... she caught him by his garment, saying, Lie with me: and he left his garment in her

hand, and fled, and got him out” (Gen. 39:7-12). In a similar way, we must “flee fornication”, for like Joseph we “are bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:18-20), and we must remain obedient to our Master.

WORDS

Words are powerful, and can seduce the unwary:

“With her much fair speech she caused him to yield, with the flattering of her lips, she forced him” (Vs. 21).

Just as it was the spoken words that enticed the simple – even so is it today. Persuasive doctrines, designed to appeal to the flesh, entice many away from the love of the Truth. Like Israel of old, they “say to the seers, See not, and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits” (Isa. 30:10).

And the result is that the Simpleton blunders into her trap:

“he goeth after her straitway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; Till a dart strike through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life” (Prov. 7:22-23).

By contrast, the words of God are an antidote to the poisonous venom of the serpent mouth (cp. Rom. 3:13). Hence the last section of our chapter commences with the exhortation: “Hearken unto me now therefore, O ye children, and attend to the words of my mouth ...” (Vs. 24). The house of the adulteress “is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death” but those who remain in the Father’s house will not perish. “The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath” (Prov. 15:24). Hence Paul exhorts:

“if ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:1-2).

And again, just as we saw at the beginning, the Word must dwell in our hearts by faith: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom ...” (Col 3:16). Rather than being a simpleton who is easily led astray by a seductive adulteress, it is better to become wise unto salvation by trusting in the Word of God. Then, we will not be beguiled, but instead wait patiently for the goodman of our house to return, and be rewarded by him in due course.

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