

Proverbs 7:1-27

As we've come to expect in these first seven chapters, our passage this morning once again begins with an exhortation to *my son* (v. 1). After another instruction reminiscent of Deuteronomy 6 (*bind them. . . write them. . .*), we are then told to treat wisdom as a *sister* (v. 4).¹ It's as if Solomon is trying to impress the importance of wisdom upon us, examining its benefits from multiple angles. No matter how we slice it, wise living is better! Clinging to wisdom in this way will keep us *from the immoral woman* (v. 5). And, as we've seen before, it's not merely about an immoral woman, it's about any form of foolish living.

The enticing call of foolishness is then laid out for us in the bulk of the chapter, vv. 6-20. The father is looking out into the street at a son not his own: a *simple youth, a young man devoid of understanding* (v. 7). This son didn't have the benefit of a wise father, who should've warned him about the actions he was about to take. Under the cover of nightfall, this young man slips back and forth among the shadows to position himself well for his folly.

This immoral woman – foolishness personified – pulls out all the stops in appealing to this young man's senses. She kisses him (v. 13), she appeals to his reason (v. 14-15), she entices him with the fine pleasures of touch and smell (vv. 16-17), not to mention the *delight* of love (v. 18). On top of it all, her husband is away, and no one needs to know (vv. 19-20)!

We might think, who would be allured to be a fool? Yet, is it that difficult to imagine? We recall Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden: the fruit looked good and tasty, and there was a desire to *make one wise* (Gen 3:6). Satan tempted Jesus to the same ends in the wilderness, appealing to the eyes, the stomach, and the pride of life (cf. 1 John 2:16). May we not think little of the appeal of sin and foolishness! It is pervasive! The world, the flesh, and the devil will throw everything at us to keep us from representing God well through wise living!

Yet, we'd do well to heed the words of the father in Proverbs. The fool yielded and was seduced (v. 21), just as Eve was (and even more importantly, Jesus wasn't!). We think of the disastrous consequences of the Fall in Genesis 3, but consider the consequences of our individual foolishness in vv. 22-23. The fool is like *an ox going to slaughter, or an arrow that strikes a liver*. At the end of it all, this foolishness and sin cost him *his life*.

Because of that, we return to the father's warning to end the passage in vv. 24-27. Consider v. 25:

*Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways,
Do not stray into her paths;*

We have a similar statement from Jesus in Matthew 7:13-14:

Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

¹It seems as though, in Wisdom literature, *sister* is another word for a spouse or beloved. Longman writes: "In its ancient context, this language is intimate. 'Sister' is here not a reference to a sibling, but rather a romantic designation similar to its use in Song 4:9. It is now well established that the use of 'sister' as a term of endearment between an intimate couple was common in the Near East, particularly in Egypt." *Proverbs*, 187.

There are many ways to turn to sin and folly. There's only one path to wisdom and truth. Just as Jesus talked about *the way that leads to destruction*, so also the father in v. 27:

*Her house is the way to hell,
Descending to the chambers of death.*

In the coming weeks, we will arrive at the body of the book of Proverbs with all of its short sayings. When we do, we'd do well to remember that they're not empty platitudes. Following the wisdom of the Word of God leads to great blessing, while ignoring them leads to ruin.