

TEXT — 5:1-14

1. My son, attend unto my wisdom;
Incline thine ear to my understanding;
2. That thou mayest preserve discretion,
And that thy lips may keep knowledge.
3. For the lips of a strange woman drop honey,
And her mouth is smoother than oil;
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 on Sheol;
6. So that she findeth not the level path of life:
Her ways are unstable, and she knoweth it not.
7. Now therefore, my sons, hearken unto me,
And depart not from the words of my mouth.
8. Remove thy way far from her,
And come not nigh to the door of her house;
9. Lest thou give honor unto others,
And thy years unto the cruel;
10. Lest strangers be filled with thy strength,
And thy labors be in the house of an alien,
11. And thou mourn at thy latter end,
When thy flesh and thy body are consumed,
12. And say, How have I hated instruction,
And my heart despised reproof;
13. Neither have I obeyed the voice of my teachers,
Nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!
14. I was well-nigh in all evil
In the midst of the assembly and congregation.

STUDY QUESTIONS OVER 5:1-14

1. Why should a father teach his son (v. 1)?
2. How does v. 2 say wisdom will show up?
3. Comment on the 2 figures used in v. 3.
4. How is the "end" in v. 4 different from what we read in v. 3?
5. Where does the evil woman's way go (v. 5)?
6. What kind of person is this woman (v. 6)?
7. What is the purpose of v. 7 being where it is?
8. Why is the instruction in v. 8 so pertinent?
9. How deeply does such a person usually get involved (v. 9)?

10. How would strangers be filled with his strength (v. 10)?
11. What does such living often do to one's body (v. 11)?
12. Whose instructions had not been heeded (v. 12)?
13. People learn, but sometimes it is too (v. 13).
14. What is the meaning of v. 14?

PARAPHRASE OF 5:1-14

- 1-6. Listen to me, my son! I know what I am saying; listen! Watch yourself, lest you be indiscreet and betray some vital information. For the lips of a prostitute are as sweet as honey, and smooth flattery is her stock in trade. But afterwards only a bitter conscience is left to you, sharp as a double-edged sword. She leads you down to death and hell. For she does not know the path to life. She staggers down a crooked trail, and doesn't even realize where it leads.
- 7-14. Young men, listen to me, and never forget what I'm about to say: Run from her! Don't go near her house, lest you fall to her temptation and lose your honor, and give the remainder of your life to the cruel and merciless; lest strangers obtain your wealth, and you become a slave of foreigners. Lest afterwards you groan in anguish and in shame, when syphilis consumes your body, and you say, "Oh, if only I had listened! If only I had not demanded my own way! Oh, why wouldn't I take advice? Why was I so stupid? For now I must face public disgrace."

COMMENTS ON 5:1-14

V. 1. Life's experiences and learning bring to a father a degree of wisdom and understanding that he passes onto this children. Here is the same instruction found variously worded in Prov. 1:8; 2:1,2; 3:1; 3:21; 4:1,2; 4:10-13; 4:20,21; 6:20,21; 7:1-3; 7:24.

V. 2. "Discretion" is "good judgment in conduct and especially in speech". "Preserve" and "keep" are interchangeable in the two statements of this verse. Great care should be exercised in our speech so that it always reflects discretion and knowledge.

V. 3. Several lengthy sections of the first chapters of Proverbs are given to warning against immorality. Immorality has proven to be one of people's greatest pitfalls. Psa. 55:21 also speaks of wicked people's "smooth" speech ("smooth as butter,"

“softer than oil”), False teachers also employ “smooth and fair speech” to succeed at their perverse ways (Rom. 16:17,18). The warning of our verse about this woman’s “lips” and “mouth” may be relative to her flattering words (see Prov. 2:16; Prov. 6:24), or it may be relative to her kisses (Prov. 7:13).

V. 4. Sinners fall for the pleasure involved while wisdom (the father in this verse) sees the “end”. The bitter end of such indulgence (“bitter as wormwood”, “sharp as a two-edged sword”) is to be contrasted with the “honey” and “oil” of v. 3. Solomon said, “I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets and whose hands are bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her” (Eccl. 7:26).

V. 5. A triple parallel: “her feet” and “her steps”, “go down” and “take hold on”, and “death” and “Sheol”. Before we go with somebody, it is the part of wisdom to find where she is going. Sin always leads to death: “In the day that thou eatest these of thou shalt surely die” (Gen. 2:17); “They that practice such things are worthy of death” (Rom. 1:32); “As through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12); “the end of these things is death” (Rom. 6:23); “Sin and death” (Rom. 8:2); “Sin, when it is full grown, bringeth forth death” (Jas. 1:15). The body would come to “death” at which time the spirit would depart to “Sheol” (Hades). Prov. 7:27 says, “Her house is the way to Sheol, Going down to the chambers of death.”

V. 6. Consider Prov. 4:26 in connection with this verse: “Make level the path of thy feet, And let all thy ways be established.” Our verse says such a woman never knows this way: she is “unstable”, undependable, and has nothing that she can hold onto. Man likes level ways to travel (they are so much easier than to be going up and going down hills), but such a woman knows nothing of the good road of life. And yet her kind has never neared extinction!

V. 7. Another return to “my sons” (plural) instead of the customary “my son” (singular). The plural is used 3 times in Proverbs: here, 4:1; 7:24. “Hearken to me,” says the father and not to “her”! “Depart” from her but not from the “words of my mouth”.

V. 8. The best way to keep from getting caught is to stay away from the trap. Quarantines are to keep people isolated

from the problem. Eve said they were not even to "touch" the tree (Gen. 3:3). We are told to "come...out from among them", to be "separate", not even to "touch" the unclean thing (II Cor. 6:17). The pure Joseph did not even want to be around the seductive Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:10).

V. 9. Fornication is seldom a one-time matter (unless one repents). Usually (like with alcohol) one gets involved for "years", and his good name ("honor") is sacrificed. Immorality is "cruel" in what it does to the guilty, to his mate, and to his family.

V. 10. Others will have the substance earned through strength and labor. Prov. 6:26 says, "On account of a harlot a man is brought to a piece of bread." The Prodigal Son had devoured his inheritance with harlots (Luke 15:13,30).

V. 11. God has seen fit to visit immorality with the plague of various social diseases (venereal diseases such as syphilis, gonorrhea, and lymphogranuloma). The father had foreseen the mourning sure to come, but a young man might not consider it because of the sinful pleasure that precede it.

V. 12. A man suffering his last would have learned, but it would be too late to profit him. His father would probably be dead and gone by the time the prodigal wakened up to reality with a disease-ridden and ruined body, but his father's words would return to his mind with greater meaning. As he looks back, he sees that he actually "hated" and "despised" his father's instruction. Other instances of such; Prov. 1:25,29; Prov. 12:1.

V. 13. "Teachers" implies that others besides his father had tried to counsel him. Surely his mother would have been one of them ("Forsake not the law of thy mother"--Prov. 1:8). He had had good teachers (like many), but he was "smarter" than his teachers--he followed his own ways!

V. 14. "Such was my shamelessness that there was scarcely any wickedness which I did not commit, unrestrained even by the presence of the congregation and assembly. The fact which the ruined youth laments is the extent and audacity of his sins" ("Pulpit Commentary").

TEST QUESTIONS OVER 5:1-14

1. Where else in Proverbs is such instruction given (v. 1)?
2. What 2 words in v. 2 are interchangeable in meaning?
3. Where else besides v. 3 does the Bible warn about

“smooth” talk put out by evil people?

4. What in v. 4 is different from something in v. 3?
5. Where else besides v. 5 does the Bible connect death with sin?
6. Comment upon v. 6.
7. The father bids his son to hearken to him instead of to (v. 7).
8. The father bids the son to forsake instead of his instruction (v. 7).
9. How is the best way to keep from getting caught in a trap (v. 8)?
10. Comment on “years” in v. 9.
11. Comment on “honor” in v. 9.
12. Comment on “cruel” in v. 9.
13. Who wasted his substance with harlots (v. 10)?
14. What divine outcry against immorality shows forth in v. 11?
15. What mistake did the son make as he reflected on his case (v. 12)?
16. Comment on “teachers” (plural) (v. 13).
17. What is v. 14 talking about?

TEXT — 5:15-23

15. Drink waters out of thine own cistern,
And running waters out of thine own well.
16. Should thy springs be dispersed abroad,
And streams of water in the streets?
17. Let them be for thyself alone,
And not for strangers with thee.
18. Let thy fountain be blessed;
And rejoice in the wife of thy youth.
19. As a loving hind and a pleasant roe,
Let her breasts satisfy thee at all times;
And be thou ravished always with her love.
20. For why shouldest thou, my son, be ravished with a
strange woman,
And embrace the bosom of a foreigner?
21. For the ways of men are before the eyes of Jehovah;
And he maketh level all his paths.
22. His own iniquities shall take the wicked,
And he shall be holden with the cords of his sin.

23. He shall die for lack of instruction;
And in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray.

STUDY QUESTIONS OVER 5:15-23

1. What does v. 15 mean?
2. What is the meaning of v. 16?
3. Is it all right for a man to share his wife with others (v. 17)?
4. V. 18 is a restatement of what previous verse?
5. What is a "hind", and what is a "roe" (v. 19)?
6. Why should one embrace the bosom of a foreigner and be ravished with a strange woman (v. 20)?
7. What does v. 21 mean?
8. How is the bondage of sin brought out in v. 22?
9. What is sin called in v. 23?

PARAPHRASE OF 5:15-23

- 15-21. Drink from your own well, my son--be faithful and true to your wife. Why should you beget children with women of the street? Why share your children with those outside your home? Let your manhood be a blessing, rejoice in the wife of your youth. Let her charms and tender embrace satisfy you. Let her love alone fill you with delight. Why delight yourself with prostitutes, embracing what isn't yours? For God is closely watching you, and He weighs carefully everything you do.
- 22,23. The wicked man is doomed by his own sins; they are ropes that catch and hold him. He shall die because he will not listen to the truth; he has let himself be led away into incredible folly.

COMMENTS ON 5:15-23

V. 15. Instead of carrying on immorally, he counsels his son to get married, have his own mate, and partake of his own well and cistern. This is what he will do in other fields of life. He will have his own garden--he will not steal out of his neighbor's garden. He will have his own flowers--he won't steal from his neighbor's flower garden. Heb. 13:4 says, "Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled"--that which is sin outside of marriage is innocent within the bounds of

marriage--"for fornicators and adulterers God will judge"--those who carry on immorally apart from or outside of the marriage bounds.

V. 16. "The figurative language is still continued, and under the terms 'fountains' and 'rivers of waters' are to be understood children, the legitimate issue of lawful marriage...The meaning appears to be: 'Let thy marriage be blessed with many children, who may go abroad for the public good'" ("Pulpit Commentary"). Psa. 127:3-5 pictures such: "Children are a heritage of Jehovah; And the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, So are the children of youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them." And Psa. 128:3: "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine, In the innermost parts of thy house; Thy children like olive plants, Round about thy table." The question form of our verse shows that a man should not beget illegitimate children.

V. 17. Do not consent to living with a wife who is unfaithful. This verse puts the thought into commandment form: it says, "Don't share your mate with anybody else;" and observation confirms that it seldom works out to keep living with an unfaithful mate in the hope that everything will ultimately turn out all right. Mate-trading is not only forbidden by this, but it is inevitably the ruin of marriage.

V. 18. This carries the same thought as v. 15, only in more explicit language. God has created you so you have all the possibilities of love and enjoyment at home. Eccl. 9:9 says, "Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest." But people who lacked the character, conviction and conscience to behave themselves during their courtships often tire of one another during the years of marriage, and then the same lack of character and control causes them to become "grumpy" with each other and to seek immoral connections with others.

V. 19. "Pulpit Commentary" says, "The loving hind and pleasant roe...descriptive of the grace and fascinating charms of the young wife...She is to be the object of thy love and devotion, the one in whom thine affections are to find the fulfillment of their desires." The correctness of the above is brought out by the fact that the "hind" and the "roe" enter often into the erotic poetry of the East.

V. 20. Two great thoughts involved here: (1) Be ravished with your own wife; embrace your own sweet wife; who should be dearer to you than the one who is for you alone? (2) Don't be

ravished by and don't embrace any other; it is wrong to do so; and the whole affair will let you down in time.

V. 21. Many passages show that no man, though he may try to slip around behind the back of his wife and carry on with some other woman, can conceal his deeds from God: "The eyes of Jehovah run to and fro throughout the whole earth" (II Chron.^{Chron.} 16:9); "Doth not he see my ways?" (Job 31:4); "His eyes are upon the ways of a man, And he seeth all his goings" (Job 34:21); "The eyes of Jehovah are in every place, Keeping watch upon the evil and the good" (Prov. 15:3); "Mine eyes are upon all their ways; they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity concealed from mine eyes" (Jer. 16:17); "...whose eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men, to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer. 32:19); "They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness; now have their own doings beset them about; they are before my face" (Hos. 7:2). For the statement, "he maketh level all his paths," the Margin seems to fit the context and sense better: He "weigheth carefully" all his paths.

V. 22. "Most people who follow unlawful pleasures think they can give them up whenever they please, but sin repeated becomes customary, custom soon engenders habit, and habit in the end assumes the form of necessity; the man becomes bound with his own cords and so is led captive by the devil at his will" ("Clarke"). Iniquity is like an outlaw who overpowers a person and then keeps him by chaining him. Christ came to release all such: "He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives" (Luke 4:18).

V. 23. Not that he didn't have instruction but that he had instruction that he didn't heed, for in v. 12 he admitted, "How have I hated instruction, And my heart despised reproof; Neither have I obeyed the voice of my teachers, Nor inclined mine ear to them that instructed me!" Sin is here called "folly" (a "great" folly) that takes one out of the path ("astray") like a lost and wandering sheep and gets one off-course (like a wandering star for whom the blackness of darkness is reserved forever--Jude 13). Both God and decent people have always considered fornication and adultery a "great" sin.

TEST QUESTIONS OVER 5:15-23

1. Is it wrong for husband and wife to enjoy the affectionate life (v. 15)?
2. What does v. 16 forbid in question-form?
3. Does God say it is all right to continue living with an unfaithful mate (v. 17)?
4. What previous verse in this chapter is saying the same as v. 18?
5. In what other literature were "hind" and "roe" used as symbolic of the grace and fascinating charms of love (v. 19)?
6. What is forbidden in v. 20?
7. Cite some other passages besides v. 21 that tell of God's all-seeing eye.
8. What does v. 22 emphasize about sin?
9. Why is fornication called "folly" in v. 23?

PONDERING THE PROVERBS

POSSESSION OF HAPPINESS

A man's own success has much to do with his possession of happiness. Listen to three verses upon this subject: "A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth: and the recompense of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him" (12:14). When a person has said the right thing and has done the right thing, it brings him personal satisfaction, and he enjoys the reward of right doing. A second passage states it so well, when it says, "The desire accomplished is sweet to the soul" (13:19). When a person has launched out into a project and has accomplished it, how good it feels. To spend a day in carrying out well-laid-out plans is one of life's greatest joys, and for the most part, it is an everyday privilege. A third passage reads: "Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life" (13:12). When a person has planned for something and then finds that its realization cannot be at the time expected, it brings a letdown that is well described by the words, "maketh the heart sick." All of us have sometime known what it is to be sick of heart over a deferred hope. But, the passage says it is a tree of life to us when that desire is realized. So, our successes and failures have much to do with our happiness or our lack of it.

But, there are other things that enter in also. 15:30 says, "A good report maketh the bones fat," after it says, "The light of the eyes rejoiceth the heart." Similarly does 25:25 report, "As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country, when one has been eagerly awaiting news, is just as exhilarating to his spirits.

Then, when one's spirit is bowed in sorrow, how good it is to have the comfort of another! 12:25 says, "Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good work maketh it glad." And 16:24 says, "Pleasant words are as any honeycomb, sweet to the soul, and health to the bones." Such words, either uttered to us when our spirits need refreshment or uttered in the normal course of conversation, cast a spirit of cheerfulness about us which we all appreciate. Unpleasant words do quite the opposite.

A life of trust in God also brings happiness to a person. "He that handleth a matter wisely shall find good: and whoso trusteth in the Lord, happy is he" (16:20).