A father's advice

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Preacher: Rev James Maciver

[0:00] Proverbs chapter 5 The book of Proverbs chapter 5 Looking at the passage that we have there in chapter 5 down to verse 14 Proverbs and chapter 5 where we find in verse 7 Hear me now therefore O ye children and depart not from the words of my mouth Now the speaker in this passage and throughout these first nine chapters of Proverbs the speaker is the father, a father who is giving instruction He speaks of himself as an instructor, he speaks of himself as a father speaking to his children, speaking to his family and throughout the book of Proverbs especially in these first nine chapters we find a description given of two women

Two women whose contrasts are pointed out There is first of all what is described in these chapters as the strange woman The woman who is seen in terms of harlotry, of prostitution That is exactly how these chapters speak of this woman She is the harlot, she is the strange woman And set against that there is the elegant, the beautiful The woman with them wisdom And it's quite deliberate on the part of the book of Proverbs to set these two women against each other because they both stand as representatives of two ways of living our lives The strange woman is the representative of the ways of sin
And the woman, the figure of wisdom, is the representative of the path of life And the two are set one against the other so as to draw out the contrast between them so as to draw out the consequences of either following the one or the other And sometimes in fact the woman's wisdom is given leave to speak for herself The woman wisdom describes not only herself but describes the strange woman and the ways of the strange woman The woman wisdom speaks out particularly verses 8 and 9 She is seen to be a woman who calls to us My voices to the sons of men She's a woman who's prepared a banquet in chapter 9 And she's inviting us to partake of that banquet in her house rather than in the house of the strange woman Now read the very practical, important lessons from this book of Proverbs
And here this father then is giving instructions to his family We're hearing the voice of one who is instructing us from his own knowledge of these things And he's describing for us here that very contrast between wisdom and the ways of sin And when he does so he describes certain of the features of sin that we must ponder seriously As we seek to live the proper way of life in the presence of God And I want to just look at these three aspects of sin These three features of sin that this particular passage focuses upon So as to divert our steps to the path of life First of all he tells us that sin deceives us And secondly he tells us that sin dishonours us
And thirdly he tells us that sin deadens us First of all sin actually deceives us Look at what he says in verses 3 to 5 For the lips of a strange woman drop as a honeycomb And her mouth is smoother than oil But her end is bitter as wormwood Sharp as a two-edged sword Her feet go down to death Her steps take hold on hell Lest thou shouldst ponder the path of life Her ways are movable That thou canst not know them And there are two ways in that by which sin deceives us Sin deceives us Sin deceives us first of all by its pleasures And sin deceives us secondly by its pliability First of all it deceives us by its pleasures The lips of a strange woman drop as a honeycomb
[5:36] Her mouth is smoother than oil Look at how plausible it all seems Look at how sin describes its own ways Look at how sin with its pleasures captivates our hearts The smoothness of speech The honeycombed words The ways that seem so right That are so acceptable to us The ways that seem so plausible They feel right They look correct On the surface all seems to be well It's all smooth It's nice and cosy It's unruffled It's all so plausible All so pleasurable And it's so much so that we find ourselves in love with these ways We find ourselves in love with a strange woman We find ourselves prostituting ourselves to the ways of sin In the way that sin deceives us

Deceives us by its very pleasures As we stand natively as sinners in our sins We're in love with our sins We're in love with the ways of sin We're in love with a strange woman And here God is saying

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to us Here is this picture He is telling us Look at this more seriously Look at this beyond the surface Below the surface Remove the plausibility Remove the pleasures Look below them And see what you have in the ways of sin In the ways of the strange woman But he says her end is bitter as warm wood Her end is sharp as a two-edged sword Her feet go down to death Her steps take hold on hell For all the plausibility For all the pleasures
For all the way that seems right to a man The end of these things is death And you see what it says To be in love with a strange woman With the ways of sin To look to our sins And not to attend to them seriously Is to be in love with bitterness With poison With the bitterness of wormwood To be in love with the facts of death With a two-edged sword With the ways that truly And indeed go down to hell The ways of the strange woman The pleasures of sin God is saying deep, deeply Dig deeply below the apparent pleasures Of this life As Hebrews puts it The pleasures of sin for a season The short-lived pleasures of sin Yes, there are pleasures
Yes, there are things in sin That gratify the heart But that is far removed From true and abiding And lasting satisfaction What do we have?
What are we in love with? What are we holding on to? Are we steeped in the ways of the strange woman? Are we prostituting ourselves To the ways of sin?
[9:08] Are we dealt seriously with our sins? Have we really seen them As being in love with death? Are the pleasures of sin Captuating us Are the pleasures of sin Captuating us Deceiving us Seducing us Taking us aside Leading us astray And giving us a legacy of death Sin deceives Sin deceives By its pleasures And sin deceives Secondly By its Pliability Notice what he says In verse 6 Lest thou shouldest ponder The path of life Her ways The ways of the strange woman The ways of sin They are movable Pliable They are never actually fixed They move about They go to and fro That's the ways of sin for you Nothing is ever defined strictly

Nothing is ever said to be out of bounds The only firm rule is That you should have no firm rule You see how opposite that is to truth To righteousness Because that is fixed The boundaries are clearly defined The areas of acceptability Are clearly delineated Truth is fixed It's not movable It's not negotiable But the ways of sin Are not like that It's pliability They're molded to suit the occasion There's nothing fixed about it They move just to suit the whims Of the individual And sin deceives by that very fact The goalposts are moved When it seems that there's a pan of conscience
Or there's the probability of looking seriously at our sins Then we find the ground shifting And we find the voice saying to us But you haven't tried this yet There's another area here to be explored And there's nothing wrong with this area Why don't you try this?
That's what sin does It brings prodigals To see their wants Perhaps at some occasion But then they join themselves To a citizen of the far country Rather than going back to the house Of their father Where there's plenty of bread to spare Some other citizen comes along Sin says Why don't you try this now?
You've got fed up with this one way of looking at it Try this It's movable It's pliable It deceives by its pliability And isn't that the emphasis that we find so clearly And so largely in our own day?
[12:13] Isn't the philosophy of the age Or one of the great philosophies of the age anyway The whole aspect of individualism? Be yourself Don't let anyone cramp your style Let your personality flourish Don't let anyone tell you what's right and wrong You do what's right and wrong As it seems best to yourself Let your own individuality express itself Don't be suppressed by matters That seem to talk about truths And defined limits And things that are unacceptable You make sure that you please yourself Never mind what anyone else says That doesn't matter There are no boundaries Sin says be yourself But God is saying That is to be in love with a strange woman That is to prostitute yourself That is to depart from the ways of life That's to be in love with death

That's to be deceived It's not a matter of our individuality In that sense at all It's not what's right in our own eyes It's not what's right even as far as society is concerned If that is not according to scripture Whatever the norms of acceptability are in society That can never be the ground upon which we are to proceed That can never define what is acceptable as far as God is concerned Truth defines that His revealed will defines that And his revealed will says Look at this Look at it seriously Don't be deceived by sin By sin By sin's pleasures Or by sin's pliability If you look ahead to chapter 7 You can see there how
Innocently If we can use the word The sinner is led by sin's deceit In verse 21 of chapter 7 Again the strange woman is spoken about With her fair speech she caused him to yield With the flattering of her lips she forced him He goeth after her straightway As a nox goeth to the slaughter Or as a

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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 That's what he's telling us it's like When we're deceived by sin We think that we're going in the right direction We're like a bird hastening to the snare And we're oblivious to the fact that it's going to choke us As an ox led to this lot And that is why this fatherly instruction
Is saying to you and to me today Hear me now therefore O ye children Regard this fatherly instruction And depart not from the words of my mouth For this is what belongs to the ways of sin It deceives you And it deceives you by its pleasures And it deceives you by its pliability And if you're willing to be led by it You are led by it As a bird hastens to the snare Sin deceives us And I'm sure this is the kind of passage Maybe even this passage itself Certainly this book of wisdom That the Lord had in mind When he was speaking in Matthew chapter 7 Of the two ways Entering he says at the straight gate At the narrow gate
For straight is the gate And narrow is the way That leadeth unto life And few that be that find it And broad is the way That leads to destruction And many that be that find it The contrast between the two ways The broad way and the narrow way It's exactly matching The contrast in Proverbs Between the strange woman and wisdom Between the paths of sin And the path of life Enter in at the straight gate Make sure that you're walking On the right path Make sure that you're not in love Deceived by sin Secondly Sin actually dishonours us And when I say dishonours us I'm not suggesting that there's
[17:25] Any native dignity belonging to us So as to give us acceptance With God as we are as sinners Certainly God created man in his image And there is a sense in which That image of God is still Found in man Not now in perfect righteousness But certainly in other matters In his superiority over the rest of the creation For example In the rational faculties of his soul In his ability to think Nevertheless there is no dignity for the sinner Because of our sins Our loss of righteousness and holiness It is only till grace finds us Till grace takes us And grace establishes us In the righteousness of Christ Then we are dignified in the eyes of God And not till then Yet it is possible To be even less dignified

Than we are It is possible to advance if you like Or to degenerate we should put it In terms of being undignified In our relation to God In our lives as sinners And you know the more we leave sin unattended The more undignified our lives become The more dishonourable sin actually makes us At the end of chapter 8 we read Wisdom saying whoever sins against me Wrongs his own soul We are dishonouring ourselves We are made for communion with God Our soul cannot rest Until we have our rest in God In Christ And everything else we are doing out with that Is dishonouring ourselves Disfiguring ourselves Sin dishonours us We are wronging our own soul
We are going against the end of our creation Sin dishonours us Sin in its dishonouring is seen quite clearly It comes across very clearly in the problems of society as a whole Problems of drunkenness for example Problems of drug addiction Problems of a moral or immoral nature Such as homosexuality All of these problems that society has And is trying to deal with Are problems not first and foremost Of a physiological manner Of a mental matter But a matter of sin And unless the matter of sin is really dealt with Adequately in terms of the ways of scripture As it's defining what we are to do with our sins Then we're only tinkering with the symptoms
Whether it's drug problems Or problems of alcohol Or immorality Or whatever it might be The real problem The real root of the problem Is sin And until the sin is dealt with However much we may alleviate the symptoms There will be no lasting cure There will be no lasting answer to the problems Until a matter of sin is dealt with And the less it is dealt with The more it is left to itself The more it will dishonour us Personally Or as a society But don't imagine that it's just in those problems That you find sin In the way it dishonours us Sin dishonours us in all its ways Even when we find inwardly Sins that are not known perhaps to anyone else But ourselves and God Remember that Jesus says It isn't the things that enter into a man that defiles us But what comes out from the heart These are the things that defile a person And these are the things that dishonour us Because these are the things of sin The sin that defiles The sin that defiles The sin that dishonours The sin that brings us further and further Away from God And so away from this only cure for our sins In unburdening them in God's presence In the power of God in Christ To cleanse them To forgive them To heal To heal Our hearts as sinners We dishonour ourselves Personally Individually In leaving sin undealt with Sin dishonours us But sin dishonours us Secondary

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[22:35] Not only as individuals Or personally Sin also dishonours The whole matter of family life You can see how that is brought out for us here also Remove thy way from her In verse 8 And come not near the door of her house Lest thou give thine honour unto others And thy years unto the cruel Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth And thy labours be in the house of a stranger What's that saying to us?

Well in one word it's talking about wastage The wastage that comes through the ways of sin When our labour is not for our family For ourselves But it is wasted It is given to strangers People that hardly know us And our resources are actually wasted on them Through the ways of sin What is behind the problems in our society regarding family matters?
What is it that lies behind the great increase and the break up of families? What lies behind the problems of families?
In children's abuse? In children being taken into care? In children even abused in care? What lies behind children wandering the streets?
What lies behind the problems of divorce? What lies behind all that in family problems? In our society is sin friends, sin Society's standards are not the standards of the Bible They are not the standards acceptable to God and the more society makes its own standards and the more that they clash with the standards of Scripture of the revealed will of God the more dishonorable we are going to be in our lives personally and in our lives as family. In all of that you can see the ravages of sin.
[24:56] Many many times when I go into Glasgow on a Sabbath evening I find quite a number of buses even from East Kilbride and many many other cars and buses hundreds of people attending bingo sessions in Glasgow. That is the way so many people spend their Sabbath evenings, wastage, squanderings of sin. It's a tragedy but it's a tragedy caused by sin, caused by being in love with a strange woman, caused by this matter of actually following the path of sin rather than the paths of righteousness the paths that God sets out for us are in Christ. Not confined to gambling or to bingo there's so many other problems I need not spell them out for you you know them too well. But these are the ways of sin, the ways that dishonor us, the way that dishonor us personally as families as a society. We have got to realize and set out for society that the problem really is the ways of sin.

A house without Christ is a sad place. There may be many many comforts materially, much security financially, much to do with the pleasures of this world.
Friends what is that compared to the security of Christ, to the comforts of Christ, to the pleasures and the joy of Christ's salvation. Homes without Christ are sad places, homes without Christ are dark places, homes without without Christ are whatever they may be on the surface because of the absence of Christ.
They are the homes that are in love with a strange woman, where the ways of sin dominate. Surely our homes must be homes where Christ is dominant, where Christ rules, where Christ is worshipped, where our children are taught about Christ and about his ways, where the ways of the strange woman are brought out as something to be abhorred and to be avoided.
Homes where the beauty of Christ is commended, homes where the beauty of Christ shines in our own lives, so that that is communicated to our children.
[27:59] Sin dishonourable homes, homes without Christ.

As we'll see, it is a very solemn business to be part of a congregation that gathers together regularly to worship the Lord and yet have homes in which Christ is not worshipped, is not followed, is not honoured.
Sin dishonours as well as deceives. And sin finally, thirdly, deadens us.
What this father is setting out is a deathbed scene. He is saying, this is what you should do. Hear me now, ye children, lest you should mourn at the last when thy flesh and thy body are consumed. Lest thou say, how have I hated instruction and my heart despised reproof. And I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to them that instructed me.
[29:14] I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly. That's a deathbed scene, you see. That's a person who has come to the point of leaving this world and full of regrets.

Full of regrets over how he had despised instruction. How he had avoided the ways of this wisdom. The voice of the woman of wisdom. The voice of elegance and of beauty. How he regrets having gone after the strange woman. You see how he speaks even with a hint to us about our very bodily

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existence.
Though mourn at the last, he says, when thy flesh and thy body are consumed. Looking back with regret over how much time he had given to the physical sphere of his existence.
How much time he had lavished on his bodily comforts. And now he finds, after all at this point of death, that it's a wrinkled and a crumpled body that is waiting to be returned to the dust.
[30:24] And how much sin deceives us when it says, you must give much more regard to your bodily existence than to the sphere of the spiritual.

The bodily, the physical counts for much more. A dozen, these are the deceptive, seductive words of sin. And he is a man full of regret. Realizing that however important the body is in its own place. As Paul put it, bodily exercise profiteth for a little. And he says, secondly, how I hated instruction and my heart despised reproof.
You see, now he's seeing the matter as it really is.
And he's regretting it. He's regretting a misspent life. He's thinking over the times that the preacher said to him. Warning him of his ways.
[31:52] Reproving him for his sinful ways. He found that at the time to be totally unacceptable. He probably said about that preacher, who's he to tell me how I should order my life?

But now you see he's regretting it. He's regretting it sorely. The Bible describes itself as the word of God.
It is inspired of God. And it is profitable, Paul says to Timothy, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.
It's impossible to preach the word of God. In the true sense of the preaching of the word, without the element of reproof.
And I would be guilty in God's presence. If the element of reproof was absent from the declaration of his will, of his word, in the preaching of his word.
[32:59] It's the same when you read the word yourself. Don't skip over the bits that reprove you. Don't skip over the bits that really touch the cord of your conscience.

Because here's a man who regretted doing that. A picture of a deathbed full of remorse and regret. Reflections that are filled with pain.
You beware, friend, of the voice that tells you. Even as the word is preached to you, you beware of the word, the voice that tells you.
Don't bother with that, sir. You beware of the little voice in your ear that says, That's going too far. That's really unacceptable. That's too much. That is the voice of the strange woman. The seductive.
[33:58] The voice that draws you by its deceptiveness.

You and I must beware of that. Because it is quite clear why this particular woman speaks in that way. Lest thou shouldst ponder the path of life, as we saw in verse 6.
Lest thou should ponder it, lest it should enter into your mind. Seriously, the little voice comes to you and says, No, not just now at least. Leave it for another time. You'll be back here again, it says to you.
You'll hear the gospel again. There's plenty time. There's too much to live for in the present. Oh, beware of that little voice. Beware of the devil's seed.
Beware of it at all times. Beware of it even if you're a Christian. Beware of it. Because it comes to you too, it may be.
[34:57] It comes to every one of us. The voice that says, Don't take the reproof. Not bully at least.

Keep a foot in both counts. That is the voice, the seductive voice of the strange woman. Hear me, says this father.
Lest you should say also at this point of your death that you regret having despised reproof. And you see another thing that really gets to him sorely is the fact that all this took place in the midst of such advantages.
I was almost, he says, in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly. These are the two great words in the Old Testament for where the people of God come together to worship God.
The congregation, the assembly. The description of the gathered church of God. Here is a man saying, I was almost in all evil in the midst of that congregation and assembly.
[36:10] For all the advantages that he had there. The worship of God. The presence of God. The word of God. The teachings of God. The people of God.

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The people of God. The people of God. And the people of God. But I had to say, I was at the point of utter ruin. I was almost, I was on the very brink of the greatest evil for all the advantages.
Oh, how little it is for you today, merely to be part of this congregation. If that is all that there is for you, how little that is.
And yet how great a thing it is for you to be part of this congregation, to be part of the visible church of God. Oh, what great advantages you have. What great privileges you have.
What great benefits you have. And yet it is so possible to be part of all these great benefits and be in love with this great home. Isn't that a solid fact?
[37:16] That this man could say on his deathbed, how I regret the misuse of my advantages. The misuse of all that was offered me that I had at my disposal in the midst of the congregation and the assembly.

Friends, let's not despise, let's not neglect, let's not partially use these advantages. But let us press them to their full and utmost advantage.
To claim Christ for ourselves by faith. To walk in the ways of life. To abhor the ways of the strange woman.
What a solemn thing it is to have a deathbed of regrets. And how much more solemn it is to have a deathbed of regrets.
Having had so many advantages. And there is one other thing. When he says that here he is full of regrets.
[38:31] I think the most solemn thing of all about it. Is that there is no reference to repentance. Sin deadens our hearts.

And the more we go on in sin the more it deadens our hearts. The more we know of that barren familiarity with the word of God.
And you know it is possible to be so deadened. That even on such a deathbed that is filled with regrets.
There is still no repentance. For all his regrets and his remorse. They are not converted.
For all the pain of his heart. It is still if only. If only I had done it.
[39:35] He is so used to the dead. So used to living in the ways of sin. But even these regrets now at his death. Are not quickening regrets.

There is no reference. To repent. There is a paradox there. I don't know if I can explain it. But I want us to feel the solemnity of it.
He is a man filled with discomfort. And yet. He is comfortable. In his discomfort. He is comfortable in his regrets.
There is no word of turning seriously to God. His father is saying. My children hear me.
My children hear me. And depart not from the words of my mouth. Because sin deceives. Sin dishonors. Sin deadens.
[40:44] Hasn't sin deceived you for long enough? Hasn't sin dishonored you for long enough?

Hasn't sin deadened you for long enough? Rabbi Duncan said. Sin is the handle. By which I take hold of Christ.
Why should you despair in your sins? Why should you continue to be deceived by sin? Dishonored by sin? Deadened by sin? When Christ. When the fullness of Christ. When Christ offers himself in the gospel.
Isn't he saying to you today? Isn't he saying to you now? I have come not to call the righteous. But sinners to repent. Isn't he saying to you now? Isn't one of the greatest testimonies to Christ.
[41:46] Given by those who despise him. This man receives sinners. And he does. He will receive you today.

With all your sins. He will receive you as you are. If you go to him with your sins. With the burden of your heart. With the guilt of your sins.
With the pollution of your sins. He will receive you. Let there be no doubt about that. But he will not receive you.
If you die in your sins. If you die without. He will not receive you then. And if that deathbed scene is solemn.
It is nothing compared. To the regrets of a lost eternity. Because they are lasting days. They are incurable days.

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[42:49] They are incurable days. Regrets to which Christ is not offered. Hell is always. Hell is always. To be part of God.

But heaven is always towards him. And this heaven is claimed. In the very exercise of coming to you.
Why should you then. Why should you then. Have any reason to perish. You have the greatest reason of all.
To be saved. God. And that reason is. The fact. Of your sins. The fact that you and I.
Are sinners. Makes us eminently qualified. To seek God's mercy.
[43:49] God. And Isaiah is saying to us today. Whether our sins are the sins of those who have never been to him. Or have never been to him. Whether our sins are the sins of those who once were near to him.

And have departed. And have gone behind. And have gone back. Whatever sins they are. He is saying to us today. Through this picture and promise.
Seek the Lord. While he is to be found. While he is to be found. While he is to be found. Call upon him. While he is in need. Let the wicked forsake his way.
And the unrighteous man his thoughts. Let him come unto the Lord. And he will have mercy upon him. And unto our God.
For he will. Abundain. Abundantly. Yes. Abundantly. Abundantly. Abundantly. Abundantly. Part.
[44:50] Why should you. Die in yourself. Why should you. Die in yourself.

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