

A Guide To The Reader

Pastor recommends that to obtain maximum benefit from his comments you read in full from the Bible every reference whenever one appears. Otherwise the reading of the comments is simply a skimming over the surface. They are rather designed to make you stop and meditate and even look up further references as the Holy Spirit guides you. Do pray before you read that the Holy Spirit will be your Tutor and that the time you spend will be time spent with Him.

Proverbs 5

In every situation which we meet we need wisdom to react rightly, to the Lord's glory. And in every initiative which we take the grace of the Lord Jesus is required. So we are urged to regard discretion and keep knowledge; especially that we may "keep the door of our lips" (Psalm 141.3). We are going to encounter much more teaching about watching over our lips as we progress through the book.

The Bible is not structured thematically, that is to say subject by subject, as in a specialist textbook or an encyclopaedia. It is possible, for learning purposes, to go through the scriptures and group together the teaching, say, on the sinfulness of man, or the coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ, but the Bible does not do it in this way.

Likewise, we come across the "strange woman" a number of times. The woman who is estranged from God and whose design is to lead the unwary astray. All the warnings are not grouped in one place but scattered so that we may come upon them frequently and be frequently warned. We are reminded much later on in the Bible, "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Galatians 6.8). The strange woman is a frequent danger all down the years and therefore there is need of many reminders. We are warned not to be taken in by her smooth speech because her design is gratification and with such gratification comes ruin; "her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell" (Proverbs 5.5). Don't give her a second glance. Don't even think about it. "Lest thou shouldst ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable" (Proverbs 5.6). She will always find some justification to ensnare you. She will use Satan's subtle techniques of sneering, and casting doubt on the truth of God's word especially when that word seems opposed to natural pleasure. "Hath God said?...Ye shall not surely die...When the woman saw that the tree was good for food...she took of the fruit and did eat" (Genesis 3. 1,4,6).

"Her ways are moveable" (Proverbs 5.6). Moral standards are eroded by relativism – that is, that there are no absolute standards. That what is suitable to one may not be appropriate for another. Or, there are times to bend the rules a little or situations that do not require absolute honesty. It is difficult at times to perceive what lies at the

bottom of all this double dealing – “thou canst not know them” – but we may be sure there is corruption at root.

“Remove thy ways far from her” (5.8). Here is a general principle. To separate ourselves from the source of sin, from sinful situations is good, scriptural advice. At the other end of the Bible we still have the same message, “Flee youthful lusts” (2 Timothy 2.22). Concerning idolatry it is written, “come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing” (2 Corinthians 6.17) and the passage refers also to a formal linking (in business partnership, in marriage partnership) with unbelievers. The Lord Jesus Whom we serve is described thus:- “Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Hebrews 7.26) and should we not in our small way, in our different situations, emulate Him?

“Lest...thou mourn at the last” (5.11). It is one thing to take pleasure in sinful activity and it may be exciting while it lasts, but we are warned that there is a disagreeable consequence to be had. “Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh” (Proverbs 1. 25-26). If we persist in enjoying wicked ways and ignore the Father’s warning words this will be the consequence. “I was almost in all evil in the midst of the congregation and assembly” (Proverbs 5.14). Not the least of the regretful recollections will have been the thought of frequently attending with the Lord’s people with a guilty conscience of continuing sin; and the thought that they may be polluted by such secret sins.

Single-minded devotion to the Lord; single-minded devotion to our husbands or wives is a sure way of preserving our lives unblemished. How the Lord loved the church and gave Himself for it is set out in Ephesians 5. 25-29 and includes the words “so ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh”. But in giving our bodies to the strange woman, or in any parallel situation, we are destroying ourselves. “Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years to the cruel: lest strangers be filled with thy wealth; and thy labours be in the house of a stranger” (Proverbs 5. 9-10).

On the contrary, “Drink waters out of thine own cistern...let them only be thine own, and not strangers’ with thee” (Proverbs 5. 15,17). This is picture language for the freedom and purity which right living according to God’s word imparts. In its most sublime application it reminds us of the freedom of living in the Spirit. “Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (John 3. 7-8). “Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive)” (John 7. 37-39). “Stand fast therefore in the liberty

wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5.1). “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free...whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin...if the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8. 31,32, 34,36).

We see here the principle that true freedom lies in restraint. One husband, one wife. One only Lord. “Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth” (Proverbs 5.18). If untainted; if there is faithfulness, there will be free joy unalloyed. Not that there will not be trials and tribulations, for “man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward” (Job 5.7). But there will be no insidious undercurrent of a persistent guilty conscience. That word “only” in the expression “let them be only thine own” (Proverbs 5.17) speaks of a clear fountain, a pure conscience, a mind at peace.

“The ways of man are before the eyes of the LORD, and he pondereth all his goings” (Proverbs 5.21). To ponder is to think; but it comes from a word which means to weigh. So when the Lord thinks on us, he weighs our doings, He evaluates them. Again, this is a theme which we meet constantly in the scriptures because we constantly need to be brought to reflect that our actions are weighed in the balance (Daniel 5.27). The passage in Daniel refers to Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar. His father had been temporarily deposed from his kingdom. When Nebuchadnezzar’s heart was lifted up “and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him: and he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will. And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven...” (Daniel 5. 20-23).

Ignorance of the law is no excuse at law. But to know what is required and then to flout it is particularly blameworthy. The Lord observes the happenings, the things we do and weighs well why we do them. This is a constant theme of the Bible.

It is also a scriptural theme which appears from time to time that “his own iniquities shall take the wicked himself” (Proverbs 5.22). Haman, you remember, was hanged on the gallows that he had prepared for another (Esther 7.10). The final and most significant examples are in Revelation 16. 5-6 “Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy” and Revelation 18. 4-7 “Come ye out of her, my people, that ye be not partaker of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto

her double according to her works... how much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her.”

We all know that habits grip like a vice and it is terribly difficult to stop whatever it is, even if we know it is ruining our life. We cannot deliver ourselves from our sins. Our only hope is to cry to the Saviour, “Deliver me from all my transgressions” (Psalm 39.8) for “when thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth” (Psalm 39.11).

“In the greatness of his folly shall he go astray” (Proverbs 5.23). Others can see the foolishness of the one in the midst of his sinful way but while he is doing it he is oblivious of all else and cares not for the spectacle he is making of himself.

The greater the reputation, the greater the sin, the harder the fall. To the sinner who dies in his sins, without repentance, a warm welcome awaits in hell. Those who have committed such sins before await. “Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming...all they shall speak and say unto thee, art thou become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us?” And in turn all such shall be gathered finally to welcome Satan, here called Lucifer, “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground! ...They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, is this the man that made the earth to tremble?” (Isaiah 14. 9-16). Such will be the welcome of those who have led others astray when they themselves are finally condemned with those who have been dragged down by them.

The Bible is faithful. Death is constantly held before the sinner as he sins. “He shall be holden with the cords of his sins. He shall die without instruction” (Proverbs 5.22-23). We have already been warned by the same principle in Proverbs 1. 30,32. “They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof...the turning away of the simple shall slay them”. The sinner is faithfully warned of the short and long term consequences of his sinful action. That, as likely as not, he is even hastening his death. This theme constantly crops up in the scriptures, that no matter what our sins, no matter where we may be reading in the Bible or what the preacher is preaching to us, the sinner is always warned of the consequences of his sin. Always the Saviour pleads with him to escape. But if there is no repentance “there remaineth...a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation...” (Hebrews 10. 26-27). As the Bible begins to draw to its close, in the last book but one, Jude, we read – it comes across almost like hammer blows – “Behold, the Lord cometh...to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (Jude 14-15). Ungodly, ungodly, ungodly, ungodly. Let it not be that we have failed to heed the constant warnings of the scriptures and the constant pleadings of the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

