

Bible Recall: POINTS IN PROVERBS

PROVERBS 5-7 – On the Verge of Total Ruin

Solomon is writing these words as a father instructing his son. "Hear, my children, the instruction of a father..." (Prov. 4:1). "My son, pay attention to my wisdom; lend your ear to my understanding" (Prov. 5:1). "Therefore hear me now, my children, and do not depart from the words of my mouth" (Prov. 5:7).

We may not always know "why" God expressly forbids certain choices, behaviors, or patterns in life, but as His *children*, we must learn to heed rather than question His commands. We should have enough faith in God that as our Father what He commands is for our good.

The good advice of any father or teacher is only as effective as it is received and obeyed. Proverbs 5:13, "I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me!" While some children will heed the warnings, others are not *inclined* to hear, turning a deaf ear or perhaps think the advice is exaggerated and so pass it by to experience the temporary thrills of sin.

Proverbs 5-7 outlines a formula for failure, a recipe for ruin. Our title stems from Proverbs 5:14:

"I was on the verge of total ruin, In the midst of the assembly and congregation."

WHAT CAN LEAD TO THE VERGE OF TOTAL RUIN?

1. **Ruined with adultery (5:1-23).** Any good marriage will be brought to the *verge of total ruin* with adultery. Flirting with and chasing someone other than your spouse is a proven poison to kill your marriage. *Looking* leads to *lusting* which so often leads to *pursuing* what is off limits (2 Sam. 11:1-4). In studying the latter life of David, we see a man who was *on the verge of total ruin*. His honor was given to others, aliens were filled with his strength, his days were marked with mourning, and his bodily strength zapped (Psa. 32:1-4). Sin brings with it cords that continue to weave a noose around us (Prov. 5:22). The solution against ruining a good marriage is profoundly simple in this chapter but sadly often ignored.
 - a. *Remove.*
"_____ your way far from her, And do not go _____ the _____ of her house" (5:8). The advice is not: "flirt responsibly." Rather, wisdom commands to stay out of her way—do not even go "near" the *door* of her house! The naïve might ponder, "but where is the harm? Why can I not go close to the house as long I do not enter in?" Everyone who sins has first approached the door to sin before entering!
 - b. *Rejoice.*
Rather than approaching an immoral woman, Solomon stresses to be satisfied and rejoice in your own woman (5:15-20). Water is an essential need for a man. Solomon is saying that your marital needs must be met at home even as one would want to drink pure and fresh water from a good source. Rather than drink

polluted water, let your fountain be blessed and rejoice in the wife of your youth. Again, the advice is simple and straightforward to avoid the *verge of total ruin*.

2. **Ruined with bad financial promises (6:1-5).** Solomon warns against entering into debt by being a guarantee for a friend. He warns to find escape even as a gazelle would run from a hunter or a bird from the fowler. This does not mean, however, that we should run away from acts of charity for the poor or be willing to help a friend who is in need (Prov. 14:21; 27:10). However, to avoid the verge of total ruin, act wisely financially.
3. **Ruined with idleness (6:6-10).** He tells the sluggard to observe a rather insignificant creature to learn a substantial lesson. The ant, though small has a giant-sized motivated work-ethic! The Bible in Basic English translates, "Go to the ant, you hater of work; give thought to her ways and be wise:" (Prov. 6:6). Without an overseer, the ant is self-motivated to harness and guide her drive to put in a full day's work preparing even for the bad days. Solomon warns that being lazy and hating work will strip you of your prosperity as fast as a thief which breaks in and plunders your possessions. Being slothful will take you to the verge of total ruin.
4. **Ruined with perversity (6:10-15).** "A worthless person" is described here. The word for "worthless" was often transliterated by the King James translators as "Belial" (see Deut. 13:13; Jud. 19:22; 20:13; 1 Sam. 1:16; 2:12; 10:27; 25:25; etc.). It essentially means *profits nothing*. Though he is showy by winking with his eyes and shuffling his feet, he has a perverse mouth and devises wickedness in his heart. I think the warning is that of a dishonest man where there is a lack of good in character and a very real contradiction in what he says versus what he actually accomplishes. This one will be broken beyond repair and is on the verge of total ruin.
5. **Ruined by engaging in the things God hates (6:16-19).** Seven abominations are listed here:
 - a. A proud look. The look of pride reflects a heart full of pride. A heart full of pride is a heart that has no room for God. "The wicked in his _____ does not seek [God]; God [is] in _____ of his _____" (Psa. 10:4).
 - b. A lying tongue. "Lying lips [are] an _____ to the LORD, But those who deal truthfully [are] His delight" (Prov. 12:22). Lying lips are weaponized words of hatred, "A lying tongue hates [those who are] crushed by it, And a flattering mouth works ruin" (Prov. 26:28). The gossip, slanderer, etc. work only from hatred no matter how loving they may try to come across.
 - c. Hands that shed innocent blood. Murder is the unmerciful and unjust killing of the innocent. It completely defies the righteous character of our God who in mercy extends life to those who will heed (Deut. 27:25; 2 Kin. 24:4; Jn. 3:16; 5:26; 1 Tim. 6:13; Jude 1:21). Liars and murders will be grouped together in hell (Rev. 21:8). Human history is littered with countless and senseless killings. It appears to be an ever-constant plague of human godlessness. "Their feet [are] swift to shed blood" (Rom. 3:15).
 - d. A heart that devises wicked plans. God calls for a cleansing of the heart, "O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, That you may be saved. How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you?" (Jer. 4:14).

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- e. Feet that run to evil. They have a zeal to accomplish what they have designed by their hearts. They run to evil! Christ calls us to cling to and pursue what is good (1 Thess. 5:21; Titus 1:8; Rom. 12:9).
- f. A false witness (cf. Zech. 8:17). "A man who bears false witness against his neighbor [Is like] a club, a sword, and a sharp arrow" (Prov. 25:18). Again, weaponized words are in view! He has become an instrument for that person's death and is, therefore, an equal participant in the outcome. "You shall not circulate a false report. Do not put your hand _____ the wicked to be an unrighteous _____" (Exod. 23:1).
- g. One who sows discord. Such is tightly connected to the perversity within the heart and the construction of evil (Prov. 6:14). "Best friends" have separated from each other due to the whispering of a slanderer (Prov. 16:28)!

Solomon returns to the destructive element of adultery in 6:20-7:27 and the warning is against putting yourself on a pathway to such a temptation. There cannot be a stronger case made against infidelity and the temptations of it than what is found in this study. The wise will take it to heart. The foolish will dismiss these warnings and pass on to their own destruction. Their lives will end like a dried-up crust of bread (Prov. 6:26).

EXERCISES:

A. *What are the traits and tactics of the immoral woman of this study?*

B. *Who is likely prey of this woman?*

C. *What is the solution to escape this kind of woman?*

Conclusion:

Sexual infidelity can be enticing; yet it is dangerous, damaging, and destructive not only to the present, but in eternity (Heb. 13:4). However, Jesus died to take away all our sins. Rahab left harlotry and married one from Judah becoming one of our Lord's ancestors (Matt. 1:5). Harlots found favor with Christ when they turned to Him (Matt. 21:31, 32; Jn. 8:1-11). With the Lord we can leave "the verge of total ruin" by escaping a *house that descends to the chambers of death* and be transformed with a new hope and destination in heaven (1 Pet. 3:21; 1:3, 4)!

—Steven J. Wallace