

SERMON TRANSCRIPT

04.28.2024 | The Draw and Destruction of Sin | Proverbs 7:-1-27 | Ben Day, Senior Pastor

If you have a Bible this morning I want to invite you to turn with me to the book of Proverbs, chapter 7. This morning we're going to be in Proverbs 7 as we continue on in our series of the book of Proverbs. As I mentioned a little bit earlier in our service, we're spending this first month in this series really kind of laying some of the foundation for the book of Proverbs. We spent the first couple of weeks considering what wisdom is and why we should want it. What are the blessings of wisdom? Why would we want to take the path of wisdom? Then last week we began to consider the alternate path, that the path of foolishness or a folly or of wickedness. Pastor James Westbrook preached on what entices us to leave the path of wisdom. And today we want to continue in much of the same themes and ways of thinking as today we consider the draw of sin. What draws us away from the path of wisdom? What pulls us to the path of sin? And where does it ultimately lead us?

So this morning I want to read our text for us which is the entire chapter of Proverbs 7, Proverbs 7 verses 1 through 27. Solomon writes, "My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you. Keep my commandments and live. Keep my teaching as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers. Write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, you are my sister and call in sight your intimate friend to keep you from the forbidden woman, from the adulterous with her smooth words. For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice and I have seen among the simple, I have perceived among the youths a young man lacking sense, passing along the street near her corner, taking the road to her house, in the twilight, in the evening, the time of night and darkness. And behold, the woman meets him, dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart. She is loud and wayward. Her feet do not stay at home, now in the street, now in the market, and at every corner she lies in wait. She seizes him and kisses him, and with bold face she says to him, I had to offer sacrifices. Today I have paid my vows. So now I have come out to meet you, to seek you eagerly, and I have found you. I have spread my couch with coverings, colored linens from Egyptian linen. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love till morning. Let us delight ourselves with love. For my husband is not at home. He has gone on a long journey. He took a bag of money with him. At full moon he will come home. With much seductive speech she persuades him. With her smooth talk she compels him. All at once he follows her. As an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a stag is caught fast, till an arrow pierces its liver. As a bird rushes into a snare, he does not know that it will cost him his life. And now, O sons, listen to me. Be attentive to the words of my mouth. Let not your heart turn aside to her ways. Do not stray into her paths. For many a victim she has laid low, and all her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death.

On March 15th, 44 B.C., the Roman Senate gathered together in the theater of Pompeii. As they gathered together to begin their meeting, they noticed that Julius Caesar wasn't there. Reportedly, he was late for the meeting because he was delayed by his wife. Supposedly, his wife had had a dream the night before, in which she was holding her murdered husband in her arms, mourning him. And so she begged him not to go to this meeting. This wasn't the first time that Julius Caesar had been warned about what would happen on this day. It was reported a couple of days before, a seer, a wise person, had told him to beware of the Ides of March, which was March 15th. And so Julius Caesar agreed. He wasn't going to go to the meeting. Until a man named Decimus came to his house and said, "Julius, surely a man of your stature is not going to be persuaded by a woman's dreams and visions. Come to the meeting." So Julius Caesar went to the Roman Senate meeting and took his seat. There he found that it was a great conspiracy had been plotted against him. When he began to try to conduct the business of the meeting, he found that all the senators had daggers beneath their cloaks, including his good friend Brutus. On that day, Julius Caesar was stabbed 23 times and he died.

And I tell that pretty famous story, because I think it's actually a historical example of what actually Solomon is describing in figurative language in Proverbs, chapter 7. Julius Caesar had received multiple warnings that he ultimately chose not to heed. He went to a place where he thought he would be safe, because he at least thought some of the people there were his friends, had his interest at heart. But he did not realize that where he was going was ultimately to his death, to his destruction. Solomon says, "Such is the story of all who are drawn in to sin." In Proverbs, chapter 7, Solomon is trying to warn against the draw of sin, the dangers of sin. And you'll find here that in this story, the one who is doing the enticing or the drawing in the sin is this forbidden woman, this adulterous. Now, if you're reading this, and particularly maybe if you're a woman who is reading this passage, you might have some issue with this. You might have some issue with Solomon speaking to his sons, describing women as all forbidden women, adulteresses, who are seeking to seduce

him. You're saying, "Is this the picture that Solomon wants his sons to have of women in general?" Well, I think it's important to keep in mind that one thing we've seen is that Solomon has also depicted wisdom as a woman. We've seen lady wisdom. She is there calling for people to follow her direction, to listen to her, to cherish her. So what I think we have in this passage is ultimately this kind of contrast that Solomon has actually been setting up for chapters 5 through 7. It's this contrast between lady wisdom and this forbidden woman. And that actually kind of shapes the way that I want to approach this passage this morning together.

I do think that this passage has some particular things to say about adultery or about sexual temptation and sin, but that's actually a topic we're going to cover in a few weeks. I think the contrast that Solomon is setting up here between lady wisdom and the forbidden woman is actually presenting us with a broader picture of sin. This morning I want us to see not just the draw to adultery or sexual sin, but I want us to see the draw of sin in general. And I want us to see that Solomon is there holding up flashing lights and warning signs, trying to warn his son about the draw and the destruction of sin. In fact, if I had to kind of tell you what the main idea that I think Solomon is trying to get across to his sons in this passage, it is this, that they need to stay far from the temptation and the draw of sin because sin has a powerful draw. It is seductive. It is deceptive. It pulls people in. And what they don't realize is that it is ultimately pulling them into their own destruction and death. This is what Solomon is seeking to warn his sons of. And so this is the way that I want us to think about this passage. What is the draw of sin? When are we susceptible to it? Why are we drawn to it? And ultimately, where does it lead us?

And so first I want us to consider the question of when we are drawn to sin. When are we particularly drawn to follow this forbidden woman, if you will, to be lured in by sin and down the path of sin? The first thing I think we see is that we are drawn to sin when we stray from the Word. We are drawn to sin when we stray from the Word. Again, some of these themes that we're touching upon today are really similar to what we saw last week. And Pastor James preached from Proverbs 1. And one of the things he said was that we are enticed by the promises that come from the world. And one of the ways that we are able to battle that enticement of the world is to be enticed by something greater, to be drawn by the goodness of God and the satisfaction that is found in him. And I think that's what Solomon is saying at the beginning of this chapter, is that when you are in the Word, and when you are walking with God in his Word, you'll find yourself not so drawn to sin. But it's when we stray from the Word that we will find ourselves particularly drawn to sin. Notice how the chapter begins in verse 1. Solomon says, "My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you." Notice he's not just saying, "Read my words," but he's saying, "Keep them, follow them, and treasure them." He goes on to say in verse 2, "Keep my commandments and live. Keep my teaching as the apple of your eye." That phrase, "the apple of your eye," is your prized possession, the thing that you value the most. He says, "It should be my words of wisdom that I am speaking to you." And what I am here to say is I don't think this just applies to the words of Solomon in the book of Proverbs, but this applies to God's Word, that we are to treasure God's Word, that we are to see that it is our Heavenly Father revealing himself to us in his Word. God's Word, because we meet him there in his Word, should be our prized possession. It should be the apple of our eye. We should treasure it. Not only should we treasure it, but we should want to walk in it. He says in verse 3, "Bind them on your fingers. Write them on the tablet of your heart." When he says, "Bind them on your fingers," he's saying, "Remind yourselves of my Word." Today he might say, "Put a rubber band around your wrist, or put post-it notes on your mirrors, or set a reminder on your phone. Remind yourself of my Word, but don't just remind yourself mentally, but internalize it. Let it be written on the tablet of your heart. Meditate on the Word. Memorize the Word. Have a relationship with God in his Word. You see what he says in verse 4? "Say to wisdom, you are my sister, and call in sight your intimate friend." He says, "You have this relationship with me through my Word," God says. That will in verse 5, "Keep you from the forbidden woman, from the adulterous with her smooth words."

You see, we will be drawn to sin when we begin to stray from God's Word, when we don't value it, but we begin to listen to the words of the world, to the words of sin, which are smooth and sound really good. Now this isn't to say that anybody who reads the Bible is always going to be able to resist sin every time. This isn't to say something like, you know, a verse a day keeps the devil away, like as long as you get your, you know, daily Bible verse to show up on your phone, then you'll never fall into sin. But I think what it's saying is, we will be much more equipped for the battle against sin, and a battle against the devil, when we are staying close to God in his Word. I mean, just the fact that we are in the Word will remind us that we are daily facing a battle. The fact that we are in the Word will remind us that we need spiritual armor that God has given us. When we are in the Word regularly, I believe we will be more equipped to resist the temptation of

sin. And when we stray from God's Word, when we don't value it, when we don't meet him there, that's when we're going to find ourselves wandering to other things.

You see, this is the second part of when we're drawn to sin. As we stray from God's Word, we go close to other things. And what we'll find is that we, as we stray from God's Word, we go close to temptation. And this is the second reason why we are often, I think, drawn to sin. It's when we go close to temptation. My son Malachi is a year and a half old, so he is not only walking, but he is climbing on everything. If you ever come to our house, you'll probably often find that the chairs around the kitchen table are laying on their side. It's not just because we are just chaotic in our house, which we are, but that's actually on purpose, because we are trying to get him to not climb on the chairs, which then allows him to climb on the kitchen table. He is climbing on everything, and sometimes he'll climb up on the couch, and sometimes he'll just sit there. And there's not much cuter than a baby just sitting on the couch. That's great. But then he'll get brave and he'll start bouncing on the couch, and he'll want to walk up to the edge of the couch. And his balance isn't great. So many times he loves to get right up to the edge, but he's always going to fall if we're not there to catch him. And you look at him and you think, "Well, how silly and foolish, but it's kind of what you expect from a baby."

That's actually the way most of us live our lives. Most of us really like to get up to the edge of temptation. Most of us really like to push the boundaries. We like to not just know what's good for us to walk with God, but we want to know, "Well, how far can I go? Is this really a sin or not?" This is what Solomon observes as he begins to tell a story. So after giving his son a word to keep his words of wisdom, Solomon begins to tell the story. We don't know if it's a true story of something he's actually observed or kind of a fictitious story to prove a point, but he begins to tell a story about a young man. It starts in verse 6. He says, "For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice, and I have seen among the simple, and I have perceived among the youths a young man lacking sense." So here's a young man who is foolish, and he is passing along the street near her corner, taking the road near her house, in the twilight, in the evening, at the time of night and darkness. Here is a young man who is putting himself right up close to temptation. He is going near the whole source of sin, going right up to her house. Maybe he's come up with some reason to justify this. Maybe he said, "This is the only way home," or, "I just need to check on things," or, "Maybe I need to borrow something from her." But however he's justified it, he has now put himself in proximity to temptation, and he has done it at a particular time. Notice he is there in the evening. He's there in the darkness.

Did your parents ever tell you nothing good happens after 10 o'clock or midnight or whatever time they chose? There's probably some truth to that. Here I think there's probably some spiritual significance, that he's not just going in the actual night, but he is going in the cloak of darkness. He is putting himself in the proximity of temptation at a time when his sin can be covered up, not seen by many. In other words, he is setting himself up for failure. If his goal was to stay on the path of wisdom, he's being very foolish and flirting with the path of temptation and sin. He is not staying close to the Word. He is going close to temptation. And again, I think this is the way so many of us live our lives. So many of us really like to go and be near the temptation, even if we're not going to fall into it. Even if we think we can resist it, we want to just be near it. We'll get into probably more specifics as we walk through different areas of life in the coming weeks. But I mean, just to think about some examples.

Some people order a glass of wine, knowing that they struggle to stop with just one glass. Some people struggle with what they look at on their phone, but yet they bring their phone with them to bed. And it's the last thing they're looking at before they fall asleep. And it's the first thing they look at when they wake up in the morning. They wonder why they fall into sin. Some people struggle with a workaholicism, but yet their email is always on, their laptop's right next to their bedside. We set ourselves up for all sorts of failures by being so close to the temptation. I've heard the example before of guardrails that you would have on a road where there's a sharp drop off. So often what you'll find is that the guardrails are not right on the edge, but at least maybe a few inches to a foot away from the edge. The Bible, I think, would say there's some wisdom in setting guardrails farther back from the edge. The question's not always, how far can I go before it is sin, but where is it good for me to walk in the path of wisdom? Where is it safe for me to be and not be tempted to fall into the sin? You see, we're going to be tempted to be drawn into sin when we start to stray from the word and go close to temptation. And we really need to be careful because the draw of sin is really powerful. So many times we think we can get up to the edge and nothing will happen because we are underestimating the draw of sin.

In many ways, I think the draw of sin is like the current of the Pacific Ocean. So many times before we realize it, it can pull us in. It can be dangerous. And Solomon goes on to tell the story of how sin draws in these people. Why we are drawn to sin. So this is the next part that I want us to consider. So we see we're drawn to sin when we start to stray from the word and get close to temptation. But then why are we drawn to sin? What is it about sin that gets its hooks in us and begins to pull us down its path? What makes it so enticing and so tempting? Well, I'll just point out a few aspects of sin that I think Solomon draws out in this story. Notice what he says in verse 10. As the young man goes to her house, it says, "And behold, the woman meets him, dressed as a prostitute, widely of heart." So here we see the first reason why we're drawn to sin. It's because sin is attractive. We are so often drawn to sin because sin is attractive. What we're going to find just later in this story is that this woman is actually married, but she's not dressed like a married woman. She's dressed like an available woman. She is dressed in a certain way to attract this young man. And again, there might be some particular points of wisdom that Solomon is speaking about with adultery and sexual sin. But I think this is broadly true. That sin is attractive to us. If you go back to the very beginning in Genesis chapter 3, as Eve was considering the temptation that the serpent was bringing before her, it says that when she looked at the forbidden fruit, she saw that it was a delight to the eyes.

So often, sin looks like a delight to the eyes. Now, one thing I think is worth pointing out is that not all sin is attractive to all people. Not all sin is attractive to everyone. We used to live in Las Vegas. A lot of times I would walk through the casinos of Las Vegas. I could see people gambling, playing cards or roulette or all sorts of different ways. Not once did I have any source of temptation really within me to go and put my money on the line, gambling in that way. It just wasn't attractive to me. I did not find the pole there. There were many other things in Las Vegas that would be attractive to me in terms of sin. But this wasn't one. For other people, that would be. The question you have to ask yourself is, which sin is attractive to you? Not to point out everybody else's sins and to talk about the ways that they fail, but to really honestly ask yourself, which sin is most attractive to me? Is it lust or laziness? Is it work or wealth? Is it gossip or greed? Running out of alliteration. But you get the point. Like there are certain sins that are attractive to us, to you. Which ones tend to pull you? This is the one we need to be aware of. Because this woman, she's attractive and she doesn't always wait for him to come to her house. Yes, he's at her house it seems like in this story, but it says, as you continue in verse 11, "She is loud and wayward. Her feet do not stay at home. Now she's in the street and now she's in the market, and at every corner she lies and wait." This is the second reason that sin has such a powerful draw, because not only is it attractive, but it's also available. Sin is available. It's everywhere. It can be found in every corner of life.

Now in some ways this might sound a little contradictory to what we were talking about earlier with places of temptation, but I don't think it's contradictory. I think we need to see both sides of the balance. I think you need to recognize that there are certain circumstances and places where you are going to be particularly tempted. And I think you need to have the wisdom to avoid those areas and those situations. You need to avoid those areas of temptation when possible, but you also need to not be naive. You need to realize that you cannot always avoid sin. You cannot always avoid temptation. It is available everywhere. It's available at home. It's available at work. It's available when you're by yourself. It is available when you're around people. In fact, we could probably say that if anything, maybe in some ways it's even more available now than at other times. I mean, hasn't technology made sin just even more available to each one of us? You think about the things that we were even just listing as areas of temptation that might be attractive. How they're just all right there on your phone. To lust, you don't have to go out and look at anybody. You could just look right there on your phone. To gossip, you don't need to go find someone to speak to. You could just gossip right there on your phone. I mean, sin is available. It always has been, but maybe we need to recognize that with technology and when we live and where we live, sin is particularly available to us.

And it's not just available in the sense that it's just out there waiting for you to come initiate. Sin actually does the initiating. Listen to what Solomon says as he continues. Verse 13, "She seizes him and kisses him. With a bold face, she says to him." So notice this man has done a foolish thing by putting himself close to temptation, but it does not wait for him to initiate. Sin is aggressive. This is the third reason why sin has such a strong draw on us. It's not just attractive to the eyes. It's not just available everywhere, but it is also aggressive. It doesn't wait for you to make the first move. Sin will come after you. Just as she is lying in wait, sin, the enemy, is lying in wait. In fact, in 1 Peter, chapter 5, Peter says that our enemy is like a roaring lion, seeking for someone to devour. As we talk about sin, I mean, we're talking about actions and temptation, but we're also talking about a real enemy, one who is compared by Peter to a lion.

Can I just tell you, lions don't make good pets? Now, I know it's a different feline, but there is this example from Las Vegas, just to give another reference there, a show, Siegfried and Roy, right? They had a show in Las Vegas for many years where they had many tigers that were trained, and they were tame, and they could be part of the performance, until one day they found that tigers can't always be controlled, and it attacked. A tiger does not make a good pet. Lions don't make good pets. But I say that because I think a lot of times we try to treat these sins in our lives as pets. They can be a part of our life, and we can kind of just control them. We can tame them. We can have just a little bit. We can indulge just a little bit because it helps relieve the stress. Because it's been a long week and we've earned it. Because we're going through a lot. We come up with these reasons to keep sins as part of our lives as if they are pets. But we have to realize, sin is aggressive. As a woman who's seeking to seize you, it is a lion seeking to devour you.

But so many times I think we miss the fact that sin is aggressive because sin is also deceptive. That's the last point that I want you to notice. You probably thought I was going to give you another A and I switched it up on you. Got to keep you on your toes. Sin is deceptive. So many times we think sin is going to be one thing and it's something else. In Proverbs chapter 5 when Solomon really begins to describe this forbidden woman, he speaks about her words being like honey. Like oil dripping from her mouth. It is smooth. It is deceptive and notice how she deceives this man in many different ways. One thing you'll notice is she deceives him with what I would call religious words. She deceives with religious words. Listen to what she says in verse 14. "I had to offer sacrifices and today I have paid my vows." She is speaking as if she is a religious, righteous woman. Sometimes sin is really clearly immoral and outside of God's bounds. But a lot of times sin dresses itself up. It looks quite religious and quite righteous.

The Bible says the devil disguises himself as an angel of light. A lot of times we don't need to be so concerned about the sin just out there in the world with the sin that's right within our lives, within our church. A lot of times sin will deceive with religious words. Sometimes sin will deceive with romantic words. Listen to how she continues to speak to him. "So now I have come out to meet you, to seek you eagerly and I have found you." Makes it seem like she really loves this man. "I have spread my couch with coverings, colored linens from Egyptian linen. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh and aloes and cinnamon." Sounds great, I guess, unless you have allergies or something. That sounds like it could be tough. But then she says, "Come, let us take our fill of love till morning. Let us delight ourselves with love." It's romantic words. Sin will make you think that it cares about you. But it doesn't. Sin will speak of love when it's not really love. Sin is sometimes dressing itself up in religious words, sometimes trying to make it seem like it's got your best interest at heart with romantic words. And it will often give you even reassuring words. Notice the reassuring words she speaks. "My husband's not at home. He's gone away on a long journey. He took a bag of money with him. At full moon he will come home." Sin will often tell you, "No one's going to find out." Sin will often tell you, "It really won't cost you anything." So many times we are deceived because sin shows us the bait and hides the hook. And this is the place that Solomon ends this whole past. He ends his story by moving the picture of the one enticing from just a seductive, forbidden woman to really a butcher and a hunter.

He makes it clear that where sin actually draws us is first down a path that is disguised. Similar to the fact that sin is deceptive, where sin is drawing us is down a path that is disguised. This is what you'll see in your notes. He wants us to recognize not just that sin has the ability to deceive, but even as you begin to indulge in the sin, you may not even recognize what is happening. Even as you just begin to take small steps, you may not even realize where you are going, where the path is leading you. Notice in verse 22 it says, "All at once he follows her as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a stag is caught fast, till an arrow pierces its liver. As a bird rushes into a snare, he does not know that it will cost him his life." See, the seductive woman has become a butcher slaughtering an ox. She's become a hunter who is hunting a deer or a bird. And you don't get an ox to the slaughter, you don't get a deer or a bird in the trap by letting them know You disguise the path. You make them think that it's a good path to walk down. And I say this to say, don't be surprised that when you begin to indulge in sin, you start to think, "Well, maybe there won't be any consequences."

Don't be surprised that when you start to go down the path of sin, that you start to think, "Well, maybe this is kind of a victimless crime. Maybe nobody will get hurt." Don't be surprised that when you look around at others, you see them pursuing greed and not being generous. You pursue them in certain aspects of life, and it seems like it's working out well for them. That's because sin knows how to disguise its path. It doesn't want to let you know that it's leading you into a trap. In fact, this is why it captures so many. You notice what he says towards the end of the passage, verse 25. She's deceived many. She's disguised the path for many. That's how she's able to be so successful in drawing people down this

What you have to realize is while the path is disguised, it will ultimately lead to your destruction. This is where the passage ends. Where does sin draw us? To our own destruction. Just as Julius Caesar walked into a trap, not knowing it would end in his death, Solomon is saying, so many times people walk down the path of sin, not recognizing where they are walking, seeing that it only leads to destruction and to death. He closes the passage in verse 27. He says, "Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death." Sheol was the place of the dead. And he says, "This woman leads to the place of death, leads to the destruction. It's going to cost this man his life."

In some ways you could probably almost hear, even just though it's written on a page, you can hear Solomon's passion as he writes this passage. Probably because Solomon is speaking from some experience. Solomon knows what it's like to be seduced by sin, to fall into adultery. He knows what it costs. In many ways, it cost him his own life. It cost him his own In fact, I think that what you would find if you talk to anybody who's a believer in God and has lived in this life for more than just a little while, they would probably tell you they can see themselves in this story. That each one of us in one form or another has been drawn into sin. Time and time again, we've given into temptation. In fact, the Bible says that we've actually all been drawn down the path of sin to the place of Sheol. The Bible says that we are all dead in our sin.

And this is why, as I said from the beginning, as we read the book of Proverbs, we need to heed the warnings. We need to listen to the wisdom, walk in the guidance that it gives us. We need to see the way that sin is seeking to deceive and trap We also need to allow our attention to be turned to Jesus Christ, the true wisdom of God. Because you think about it, Jesus is the only person who has ever lived that has not been seduced by the foreign, forbidden woman. Jesus is the only person who has ever lived who did not walk down the path of sin. Sin could not get its hooks in him. It could not draw him down that path. But yet, Jesus went down to the place of Sheol. While Jesus had never gone into the path of sin, he went to the place that sin leads. He went to the place of death. And he did so to save us from the clutches of death, to save us from the place of Sheol and to conquer death.

And this is what we confess as we come to the table this morning. As you come to the table this morning, we are recognizing that we are sinful people as we spent time considering earlier in our prayer of confession. As we come to the table, we come confessing that we have walked down the paths of sin. We have given into temptation. But we are also saying that Christ is our hope. That his broken body and his shed blood has paid the price for our sin. Because of his death, he has taken away the destruction of sin. No longer do we have to fear the death of sin. No longer do we have to fear the place of Sheol because he has rescued us from that place. But not only do we look back and see that Christ has rescued us from the destruction of sin, but we also celebrate our ongoing communion with him. As we eat of the bread and as we drink of the cup, we recognize that we serve a living Savior, whose spirit lives in us today. That his spirit has been given to us that he might give us the ability to resist the draw of sin in the future. You see, as we come to the table, we look to see that Christ has conquered death and so taken away the destruction of sin that each one of us deserve. That all who trust in him know life in his name and are rescued from the place of Sheol, this place but we also recognize that in communion with him, as we go from here, we have the ability to resist the draw of sin. We have the opportunity to walk in the ways of wisdom as we have a relationship with Christ, the true wisdom of God.

So this morning, as we come to the table, would we confess that Christ is our hope? He is our hope to be freed from the destruction of sin. He is our hope to be freed from the draw of sin.