

The Adulterous Christian – Proverbs 6:20-35

INTRODUCTION

The title is a misnomer. There is no such thing as an adulterous Christian if he is desirous to live his life pleasing to God. We are not saying that a believer cannot commit this heinous sin. As long as we are found in this mortal body, we all can fall into this sin of adultery. King David is a case in point. He was known as the man after God's own heart and yet, as a believer, he committed this terrible sin. The question is not whether the believer can do it but rather, "will he do it?!" The instruction from Proverbs is that every true believer should not fall into this sin. This is a sin with grievous consequences. What is the sin of adultery?

The sin of adultery is to lust after a woman in the heart as defined by our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 5:28. This sin is a sexual sin committed by a married person, whereas the sin of fornication is a sin committed by an unmarried person. In the days of Christ and the apostles, the belief was that only when a person is caught in the act of adultery or fornication could he be charged with committing a sin. Under Roman law, it was not a crime at all; but it was a serious crime punishable by death under the law of God (see Deu 22:22-30). Under today's laws it is not deemed a crime when adultery or fornication is committed by two consenting adults. These sins have become so rampant that there is no longer any stigma of shame. Unmarried young men and women would go on holidays together without a chaperon and without blinking an eye lid. It is a norm that parents have accepted simply because they know that it is easier to climb Mount Everest on a wheel chair than to stop their children! This is the sad state of affairs that plagues our society and churches today. Is CPBPC any better?

The serious nature of the sin of adultery is in the fact that God has included a warning against this sin in the Ten Commandments. "Thou shalt not commit adultery" is commandment number seven (Exodus 20:14). There are 613 laws in the Bible, with 365 of them stated positively and 248 stated negatively. Out of these 613 laws, the LORD has His top ten which are called the Ten Commandments. The sin of adultery is a very serious sin in the eyes of God. The Ten Commandments (also called the Decalogue) are apodictic in nature and are, therefore, absolute in their essence, forcefulness and application. It does not matter what century a believer lives in or what nationality or culture he grew up in, as long as he is a believer, these Ten Commandments apply to him.

Do the Ten Commandments apply to an unbeliever's life? The answer is a resounding "No". The Ten Commandments were given to the people of Israel and therefore applied to them and all who lived in their land. For Gentiles who lived in Israel, the Ten Commandments applied to them as well because they were expected to live like the Israelites when in Israel. Did the Commandments apply to the nations surrounding Israel such as the Philistines, the Ammonites, Moabites or the Edomites? The answer is "No". These nations would not be judged by God based upon the law of God which they were not given. God would use His creation, which is known as general revelation, to judge and condemn all Gentiles (Romans 1:18-20). In the New Testament times, the local church had replaced the nation of Israel as the visible witness of God's grace on earth. The local churches are found all over the world in many different countries bound by the laws of the lands. Therefore, as in the OT times, the Ten Commandments are applicable only to the members within the local churches and not to the nations that the local churches exist in. However, it does not mean that when gospel meetings are conducted or when the gospel is shared, the Ten Commandments cannot be used to condemn sinners and point them to Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

Proverbs is a book for believers on how to conduct their lives. It definitely has warnings and instructions for every believer to take note of in order to live a holy life.

I. Adultery Prevented – 6:20-23

The tenderness from the Heavenly Father is emphasized by the use of the term “my son.” The son is old enough and has turned into a man. The instruction to him remains as an instruction because the decision to obey has to be made by the son himself. The Father can no longer make the decision for him. The sin of adultery is a sin committed more so by men than women. This is not to say that women will not commit such a sin. In our society, more often than not it is the man who is the aggressor and the woman the seductress. This is a warning for both sexes but more so for the man. Hence, the approach from this passage in Proverbs is that of the woman being the seductress or temptress and the man as the one being tempted.

- **Maintain God’s Word (Verse 20b)** – The son is commanded by the Father to keep His commandments. The word “keep” means to maintain, implying that the son is already keeping them (just as every true believer has been) but he must continue to keep them all his days. Past obedience to God’s Word is good, for it demonstrates a good foundation. However, we are not supposed to keep on leaning on past obedience when we face present dangers. Present dangers require present obedience. Therefore, the maintenance of our obedience of God’s Word is emphasized here. The tendency to remember old victories and sit on them without living for Christ in the present has been the bane of many older Christians. They would like to think that they had done enough and thus do not need to do any more. They will wilt and rot away in their soul, and fall into sin and end miserably in a life of disobedience and shame. This is the story of too many servants of God. The Heavenly Father desires His sons to keep obeying without stopping.

The commandments of our Heavenly Father include the Decalogue but are not limited to the Decalogue. New responsibilities and temptations will come the way of every believer. We must never stop maintaining God’s Word, for this is the ONLY WAY to keep us from sinning against God. There is no other way outside of obeying the precious perfect Word of God which will keep us pure and walking the holy and narrow path of righteousness. The narrow path which leads to life is less often travelled as many prefer the broad way that leads to destruction. This is not an option but an urgent warning to every believer as seen by the use of synonymous parallelism. The son is commanded to not forsake the law of his mother. This simply means that the instruction to children is to be done by both father and mother. Both of them must ensure that they teach the same biblical truth; they love their children and should wish the very best for them. The tenderness behind the teaching to the grown up son is more evident by the involvement of the mother.

- **Wear God’s Word (verse 21)** – Never leave home without God’s Word. To do so is to leave home spiritually naked. The believer is at risk for all kinds of attacks. These attacks are deadly, subtle and very potent. Many strong men have fallen because they left home without the perfect Word of God. Therefore, the Heavenly Father instructs His sons to bind and to tie. The first verb, “bind” has the idea of making something stronger by binding it. The object of this verb is “the heart.” God’s children are to bind their hearts continually, without unbinding them at all! The heart must be bound all the time regardless of circumstances, time, place or age. This keeps the heart strong so that it will not be weakened by the fear of persecution or the powers of seduction.

How do we bind the Word of God to our hearts? This is done by memorization and, more importantly, a right understanding through a deep study of God’s Word. Always have a heart to obey every Word of God and never doubt the Word. Have the highest regard for the Word of God at all times no matter what man may say to diminish it. This is how we “eat” and

“drink” the Word of God. It is internalised into the very depths of our souls. The heart is the source of all our desires and affections. If it is protected by God’s Word, then God’s glory will be sought all the time. Christ’s Name will be glorified through all our actions. The motive, which is the love of Christ, will continually constrain us to love even our enemies. The only thing that can protect our hearts is God’s Word. This is the power of God’s Word.

The synthetic parallelism in this verse emphasizes the visibility of this truth. To bind around our hearts is something invisible but to tie them around our necks is visible. The word for “tie” means to “tie something around.” We must not be afraid to obey the Word of God publicly and for our friends and loved ones to see. The necklace is an ornament of beauty. The obedience of the Word of God in our life is our ornament of beauty. We must not be ashamed of our faith and trust in Christ. This is our spiritual beauty that is visible so that unbelievers will see Christ in us and glorify our Father who is in heaven. Jesus states this very clearly in **Matthew 5:16** (KJV), *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”*

- **Protected by God’s Word (verse 22)** – The protection from God’s Word is all encompassing. There is no area or situation in life that the Word of God is not able to help. We are given all round protection by the Word of God when we have it around our hearts and tied around our necks. Everywhere we go, even when we are sleeping, and in every waking moment of our lives, the Word of God guides, protects and speaks to us. In this manner, God is our ever present Help in time of need.

Whether we are travelling or just walking, the Word of God leads us. The word for “lead” has the idea of “guide” or “make straight something that is crooked.” When we are puzzled by a difficult decision that may change our life, the Word of God will help us make the right decision. The decision to choose a course of study, or the company to work in, or the school to send our children can be very difficult. The Word of God will guide. For example, **Psalms 37:23** (KJV), *“The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.”* When we are asleep, the Word of God protects us. Some of us may not be sleeping well because of worries or stress by work or problems. The Word of God will calm us as we learn to trust, submit and commit the problems to the LORD. In this way, calmness and peace will return to our troubled souls and we will sleep like a baby. The Bible verses that will help are **Psalms 127:1-2** (KJV), *“A Song of degrees for Solomon. Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. 2 It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.”*

In our waking moments, whenever we feel all alone, the Word of God speaks to us. This is the work of the Holy Spirit who will bring to our remembrance the Word of God at the right time to comfort and to direct our path. When we are afraid, the Word of God keeps us strong so that we are not crippled by our fear. When we face temptations, the Word of God reminds us of the consequences of sin and that sin will find us out. We cannot hide from our sins. The Word of God is brought to our remembrance by the Holy Spirit who dwells in all of us.

- **Life from God’s Word (verse 23)** – The commandment is a lamp, i.e. a small light like a candle. The law is a light, i.e. a luminary like the sun. The Word of God is like the lamp which is needed at night and the light of the sun by day to guide and watch over us every moment of every day. There is no moment in our lives that we have to live alone or walk alone. The LORD’s abiding presence is through His precious and comforting Word. It is sufficient for

every occasion in life, good or adverse, happy or sad. When we fall into sin, it reproves us so that we stop sinning and return back unto the LORD by walking the narrow path once more.

The reproofs of instruction literally mean the doctrines that chastise. The pastor must often chastise even though it may seem like he is always scolding. Pastors who are hirelings will shy away from the portions of God's Word that warn and rebuke saints when they err from the truth. But the Heavenly Father says that this is the way of life! Turning a blind eye to sins and allowing sins to permeate in the church are fast ways to kill the church. Festering sins and evil must be dealt with immediately without hesitation and procrastination. Elders do mock God when they cover up the sins of pastors or vice versa and abuse their power as elders. In His time, God will severely deal with these elders and pastors. They may think they can hide their sins from God but it is like trying to covering a pile of dung the size of Mount Everest! When the Word of God is faithfully and accurately preached, the saints who sin will repent immediately and return back to the way of life. The Christian life is indeed the way of life.

II. Adultery Avoided – 6:24-29

The seduction of the evil woman is emphasized in this passage. Out of all the sins that the Heavenly Father could instruct His sons to not commit, the lust of the flesh seems to be the most deadly of all. The Word of God will keep or protect us from the evil woman. Who is the evil woman? She could be anyone who causes us to sin the sin of adultery. She could be a sister-in-law, a church member, a secretary or a colleague in the office or a harlot who walks the streets.

- **Avoid her Flattery (verse 24b)** – Her mode of operation is one of flattery. The word for “flattery” refers to a smooth or slippery place. The tongue of the evil woman is smooth. She uses praise to inflate the ego of man. When the man's head swells, his guard is down. His Christian principles fly out the window, replaced by a recklessness that he never knew he had. The impulse to sin becomes very real and he throws caution into the wind, sincerely believing that he will not get caught. His wife will not find out as she is not omniscient. Either he is in a distant land or the wife is out of town. What she does not know will not hurt.

She is also called a strange woman. The word “strange” does not mean that she is weird-looking, like a person with three eyes or two mouths. It means that she is not the Christian's wife! All sexual relationships outside of marriage is a gross sin in the eyes of God, even though it is not so in the eyes of sinful men anymore! Every believer must keep his distance from the strange woman. There must be as little physical contact as possible. When we speak, we must keep our hands to ourselves and not touch. Christian girls ought to dress modestly in order not to draw attention to their bodily form. It is their godliness that must shine forth. Christian men and ladies must do their part to ensure that this sexual sin is not committed. Stay away from secluded places where such sins might be committed. Avoid clubs and seedy places where sins abound and evil men and women lay ambushes to capture the unsuspecting fool!

- **Avoid her Seduction (verse 25)** – Believers have no one to blame but themselves when they fall into sin. No matter how seductive the strange woman might be, it is still the believer who chooses to succumb. He does not have to succumb. The Holy Spirit who dwells in him has given him the strength not to succumb. If he does succumb, it is his own doing. He cannot blame anyone for his sin.

Believers are warned to stop lusting, i.e. desiring her beauty. If the strange woman is ugly, she will not be able to seduce successfully. She beautifies herself with the singular purpose to

entrap fools. The make-up and the dressing are designed to ensnare unsuspecting fools. The flesh is used to attract another flesh! All men have the propensity to love more than one woman at the same time. The line between true love and lust is very fine and when the man is in sin, the line is deliberately blurred so that he crosses it with impunity, forgetting the pain and regrets that will surely follow. Notice that the Bible warns of this desire in the heart! The heart is the starting point of this sin and most sins. However, when the Word of God is strongly bound to the heart of the believer, he is safe and sure in his protection. He will not want to sin against God. An example of a man whose heart is constantly protected by God's Word is Joseph. When he was tempted by Potiphar's wife, he replied her in a way that she could not counter! **Genesis 39:7-9** (KJV), *"And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph; and she said, Lie with me. 8 But he refused, and said unto his master's wife, Behold, my master wotteth not what is with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand; 9 There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back anything from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"* [Emphasis added] Notice that Joseph said that he could not sin against GOD, not Potiphar! If he had said that he could not sin against Potiphar, then Potiphar's wife could have said that if Potiphar did not know, it would not be a sin! The one whose heart is well protected by God's Word is safe.

Be careful of her eyelids as well. The messages that the eyes send come quick and fast. They are loud and clear and the seductive eyes are like pools of water that can touch the depths of men's souls! They are alluring and attract the fool's heart like honey to bees. The word "take" means "seize" or "capture". Her eyes are the bait and the trap is set. First it's a look; then a stare, then a touch and into her trap. Death is immediate.

- **Avoid her Snares (verse 26)** – The destructive nature of the evil woman is great. She ruins the lives of fools utterly. When the believer succumbs to her whom the Bible here describes as whorish, i.e. behaves like a prostitute, she will ruin him financially. He will have to beg for a piece of bread. How is this possible? Let us assume that the foolish man has succumbed to sin. He has committed adultery. The wife finds out, and demands repentance as is her right. If he refuses to repent because his heart has been won over by the whorish woman, the wife divorces him. He now has to support two families. By the time he retires, and if he is not rich, he would probably be a broken man. This verse is not teaching that the rich can commit adultery because they can afford to. The warning here is that the one who commits adultery ruins his life. There is always a price to pay for sins committed.

The adulteress (notice how the Bible progresses in its description of the woman from evil to strange to whorish to adulteress) is the hunter and will seek out the life of the man. The Bible deliberately describes his life as precious! The word "hunt" has the idea of "laying an ambush." A good and honest life built on trust is indeed precious or priceless. Money cannot buy such a life, for it takes many years of sharing and intimacy, sharing in prayer and bearing each other's burdens to build it. Money cannot buy time. Time is limited and is beyond price. A man builds his family together with his wife. Both are blessed with wonderful children to nurture and guide. Then the adulteress enters into his life and ruins it all. The foolish man throws everything away for what he calls love when it is nothing but lust. The LORD presents the man as the victim or prey and the adulteress is portrayed as the hunter. These strange women are out there, especially in many clubs and casinos. These are their playgrounds or rather hunting grounds. The prey walks into their traps. The adulteress uses her carnal beauty and fluttering eye lids to snare her prey. His precious life is ruined forever even though the wife lovingly forgives him and takes him home. His relationship with her will never be the

same again. The trust that has been built over the years is destroyed. They have to start from the very bottom to build it again and hope for some level of normalcy to return. A wasted life, a terrible testimony for Christ and the pain that he caused her and their children are the result of sin. If he serves in church, his service is curtailed. If he is a deacon, elder or pastor, the fall out is even greater. The shame that he has brought to the name of Christ is beyond comparison. All his unbelieving loved ones and friends will be stumbled.

- **Avoid the Consequences (verses 27-29)** – Using two illustrations to drive home the severity of this sin, the Heavenly Father impresses upon His son that there are consequences for sins committed. Can a man take fire in his bosom and not be burned?! The man wilfully takes the fire. The point to note here is that the man cannot at any time blame the adulteress. He alone is to be blamed for this sin of adultery. This is a wilful sin. The adulteress is likened to fire. The act of adultery is likened to placing this fire in the man's bosom! No man in his right mind would burn himself. This is precisely what committing the sin of adultery means.

The second illustration is similar to the first. The man is said to stand on hot coals or glowing embers. How can his feet not be burned? The man deliberately walks on hot coals. Here, the adulteress is likened to hot coals. The man can feel and see the heat coming out of the coals. Yet he walks on them. His feet will definitely be burned! How can the man's life not be destroyed when he commits adultery?!

In these two illustrations, the man who commits adultery will never be innocent! The adulteress is also the neighbour's wife. This is a rather big jump! The woman can be someone's wife or daughter or future wife! This brings the sin of adultery to a personal and intimate level. The woman might be evil, strange, whorish and an adulteress, but she is also someone's wife! She has a life and a family too. She has a husband who loves her and the sin of adultery will destroy her life just as much it destroys the man's. The adulterer cannot make an excuse for his sin as there is none. The sin of adultery can never be justified! It is the man who commits this sin and every time he does it, it is willingly done. The only way out of this sin is confession and repentance.

III. Adultery Destroys – 6:30-35

Having established that the sin of adultery destroys lives, the Heavenly Father elaborates on this destruction. It is easier to learn from the mistakes of others than to commit them ourselves. Out of all the sins of the flesh, the sin of adultery is the worst. This is a sin that causes another person to sin as well. That is why the consequences of this sin are highlighted here by God to warn every believer to stay far away from the sin of adultery!

- **Destroys the Soul (verses 30-32)** – The sin of adultery destroys the soul. The example is given of a thief who steals because he is hungry. Man would not condone such a sin but they would understand that he did it because he was hungry. The word "hungry" has the meaning of abject hunger. It has the idea of a severe drought. This same word was used to describe the situation in the Middle East in the days of young Pharaoh (Genesis 41:55) when seven years of famine followed immediately after seven years of plenty. The famine was so severe that the people soon forgot the seven years of plenty. For the man who suffers such a hunger and steals because of it, there is a cause for his stealing. When he is caught, he shall restore sevenfold. This seems excessive as the law of Israel requires a maximum of fivefold restoration only (see Exodus 22:1). Solomon, who penned the Book of Proverbs, might have referred to some other law in his days that required a sevenfold penalty. Be that as it may, it could also be understood as a hyperbole to emphasise his point. The point is that the thief who has a reasonable cause to steal is caught, he has to pay a very high penalty for his sin. If

he cannot pay, then he has to give all the substance of his house to ensure full payment. How much more for the man who commits the sin of adultery! It is a sin that can never be justified. There is no “reasonable” cause to commit this grievous sin!

Therefore, the contrast is that the one who commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding. The word “lack” means “destitute” or “void.” The word “understanding” means “heart.” The man who commits the sin of adultery has an empty heart. He has no heart at all! He is likened to a man without a conscience or even a dead man! He destroys his own soul! A soul that was once filled with goodness and sincerity is now dead and gone. It has been replaced by deception and sin and a deep sense of torment and unease. If he does not feel bad and continues to commit the sin of adultery, then it simply means that he is not born again and is dead in sin! His soul remains in a state of emptiness and destruction.

- **Destroys his Testimony (verse 33-35)** – The adulterer will receive a wound and dishonour. The word for “wound” is “plague.” He will be ostracised like one who has the plague. It is so very true of such a one who deserts his family and hurts his children by committing the sin of adultery and refuses to repent. His service in church is terminated and so will his membership. All the members of God’s family will be asked to pray for him even as they are not to have any fellowship with him. This is the practice of biblical separation on someone who commits the sin of adultery without repentance. This will be made public in the church and all his family members and friends will know. The word “dishonour” literally means “disgrace” or “ignominy.” He becomes a persona non grata to the whole church, his family and friends. He has committed a fiendish act against his wife and children and above all else, he has brought shame to the Name of Jesus Christ! To call himself a Christian and to commit this evil sin brings great shame to the Name of Christ.

The reproach of the adulterer will not (same strength as the Decalogue) be wiped away, i.e. blotted out. The word “reproach” means “disgrace.” This is a disgrace like that of a person who is being stripped in public. The idea is total humiliation. The adulterer’s humiliation will not be wiped away. If he repents of his sin, he will be forgiven by God through Jesus Christ. But the sin of adultery will be his shame for the rest of his life on earth. There is no blotting out this heinous sin.

Others who know about the deeds of the adulterer will rage against him. They will not spare him on the day of vengeance. The certainty of this truth is emphasized by the usage of the strong prohibition like that of the Decalogue. The same force is also used in verse 35. They will not care for any ransom, i.e. offerings. With righteous judgement in their hearts, they will never rest content no matter how many gifts the adulterer might bring. This is the reaction of a righteous man against an adulterer who refuses to repent. The whole of his world is against him. There is no restitution for him unless he sincerely repents of his sin and returns to his wife and family.

APPLICATION

Man's weakness is the sin of adultery! The Christian man has the strength and power from God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit not to succumb to this sin. It is one thing to commit this sin and another to make this sin a way of life. Sadly, the believer still commits this sin of adultery. But he must repent from this sin and like King David must never commit this sin ever again! Those who call themselves Christians and commit this sin without repentance are liars. The Bible makes it crystal clear that they are NOT believers. Here are two passages to attest to this truth: **1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (KJV)**, *"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, 10 Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."* And **Revelation 21:7-8 (KJV)**, *"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. 8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what way is the sin of adultery the greatest sin of all the sins of the flesh? Why is it a weakness found primarily in man?
2. What is the best way to protect the Christian man from committing this sin of adultery? Suggest what is the best way to protect a Christian leader or pastor from this horrendous sin?
3. Is it appropriate for a young unmarried couple to go on a holiday overseas together without a chaperon? They may claim that even though they would share the same hotel room, there will be no hanky-panky and no sin will be committed. What do you say to such a trip as a parent or elder or deacon? If the young man is a leader in a Fellowship Group of the church, should he be disciplined if he has committed this act? Please explain your answers.
4. Which sin is worse, the sin of fornication or adultery? Give reasons to support your answer. Can the sin of adultery ever be justified? Can this sin ever be forgiven? Would you want a pastor to be a leader in the church if he is divorced because his wife committed adultery?
5. If the Christian husband has committed adultery, what would you advise the Christian wife to do? If the husband repents of his sin and wants to come back to the family would you recommend reconciliation? What concrete steps do you recommend to bring about reconciliation?