

A Deadly Snare

(by Pastor Trent Boedicker)

Text: Proverbs 6:20-35

2/14/16

*“Do not lust in your heart after her beauty or let her captivate you with her eyes,
for the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread, and the adulteress preys upon your very life.*

Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned?

Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched?

So is he who sleeps with another man’s wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished.” (Pr. 6:25–29)

If you want to catch a mouse, what do you do? Put out a mouse trap. Go down to the hardware store, and you’ll find all kinds of options, but the old standard spring loaded trap does the job as well as any of them. Smear a little cheese, or peanut butter, on the trigger, pull back the arm, and set it in an area where you’ve spotted the little critter. In the evening, turn out all of the lights, and it won’t be long before you hear a loud “snap!” Then you’ll know you’ve got him. If the poor fella is still alive, he will be struggling to break free from the snare, but to no avail. I’ve actually seen a mouse trying with all his might to duck behind a cabinet, dragging the trap behind him, but it was too big to fit through the opening. I almost felt sorry for that little guy. If mice were intelligent creatures they would learn, over time, to stay away from that the ominous looking contraption, and would spread the word every time one of their little mouse buddies disappeared after venturing too close. (Beware! Don’t go near it! It’s not worth it!) But mice are not known for making rational decisions. They simply follow their appetite, which is what gets them into trouble.

Mice are not the only ones, however, who have a habit of waltzing right into a trap. Men and women can be just as easily ensnared, when we allow ourselves to be consumed by sinful desires. We may not even sense the danger. We may not even realize that we are rushing into a trap, until it is too late. One careless moment can affect the rest of our lives.

That is the point Solomon is trying to convey to his son, in our passage this morning. These verses are a man-to-man talk between the wise king of Israel and the future leader of God’s people. Solomon warns his son to beware of the dangers of lust. As the crown prince, there would be many women eager to jump into his bed. If he allowed himself to be seduced, it would only result in trouble. And so the young man needed to guard his heart. Mighty men have fallen because they ignored the wise counsel of God’s Word. It doesn’t take much: a flirtatious smile and an alluring glance from beautiful girl, and some guys lose all sense of reason. Lustful thoughts fill the heart, indiscretion clouds the mind, and they makes a foolish decision that they later regret. Ironically even Solomon would be tripped up himself, later in life, because he did not heed his own advice. The Bible tells us that he took many wives, which led to the downfall of his kingdom.

Temptation abounds in our modern world, as well. We live in a culture that is obsessed with sex. Everywhere we turn, we are bombarded with images of scantily clad figures (from Billboards to advertisements). You can barely turn on the television these days without coming across a program filled with sensuality or innuendo. A person no longer needs to enter a sleazy adult bookstore in order to access pornography; it is just a click away on the internet. What was once frowned upon as inappropriate has become the everyday norm in our society.

God designed physical intimacy between husband and wife to be a beautiful thing within the proper boundary of marriage, but sin has a way of corrupting everything that the Lord intends for good. We see the destructive results all around us. Marriages have been destroyed because of an affair. Families have been torn apart because of infidelity. Young minds have been enslaved by pornography. Contrary to what our world believes, there is nothing casual about sex. God's people must guard our hearts, because lust is a deadly snare.

1. We do that, first of all, by **keeping as far away from temptation as possible.**

There will always be opportunities to get ourselves into trouble, as long as we are living in this world, but we don't have to go looking for it. Again, verses 23-24 tell us, "*For these commands are a lamp, this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the way to life, keeping you from the immoral woman, from the smooth tongue of the wayward wife.*"

Guys: you know there are some ladies out there who have a reputation for getting around. Is that the kind of person you want to marry? Don't even go on a date with them. Why would you want to put yourself in that situation? It would be like flirting with danger.

Gals: you know there are some men who have a reputation for being a player. Don't bother to give them your phone number. You deserve better. Don't get mixed up with someone like that.

Sometimes people tell themselves, "I've got it under control, it's no big deal, I can handle it, I know where the line is and I'm not going to cross it." But the closer you get to the edge, the easier it is to fall. It's not worth the risk. Imagine a bright yellow sign, posted at the edge of a mountain cliff that reads: "Danger, keep away!" There's even a fence to keep people from going near. From where you are standing you can see that it is a straight drop, for about 100 feet to the ground, with nothing to break your fall. The person who goes over the edge will meet certain death. While you are standing there, a couple of foolish fellows come along who hop right over the fence and get right up to the edge. And you see the rock starting to crumble beneath their feet. You yell: "What are you guys think you're doing? Don't you realize how dangerous that is? Get back!" The passage is telling us the same thing. Don't even get close to the edge. It only takes one false step to wind up some place you don't want to be, so pay attention to where you're going.

Turn the page to **Proverbs 5:7-8**. "*Now then, my sons, listen to me; do not turn aside from what I say. Keep to a path far from her, do not go near the door of her house.*"

A married man is sitting by himself in the lunchroom, at work. One of the young ladies, he works with, walks up to the table and asks, "Mind if I sit down?" "Sure," he answers, not really thinking much about it. He was just going to read the newspaper, until his break was over, but it's always nice having someone to talk to. They strike up a conversation, and she tells him all about her big breakup, with the latest boyfriend. "I wish every guy was as nice as you," she says. She leans a little closer, and gazes into his eyes. Now he has two choices: He can hang around, and tell himself that it's no big deal, just an innocent chat between co-workers, and agree to have lunch with her again, the next day. Or he can realize that this is not a good situation, and get up, go back to his

desk, get back to work. No one begins the day telling himself, “I think I’ll wreck my life by getting mixed up in an illicit relationship with a co-worker.” But it happens through a series of compromises – first it’s lunch, and then a series of emails back and forth, and then a drink after work. Each step he takes, he ignores the warning and keeps getting closer and closer to the cliff.

It reminds me of the example of Joseph, in the book of Genesis. Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers, and ended up in Egypt, as a servant in the home of a powerful man named Potiphar. He worked hard, and demonstrated integrity in everything he did, and it wasn’t long before Potiphar noticed that Joseph was someone he could put in charge of his entire house. But there was a problem. Potiphar’s wife also noticed Joseph. She saw that he was a good looking young man. And when no one was around, she tried to seduce him.

“Come to bed with me,” she said (Gen. 39:7).

But he refused. *“My master has withheld nothing from me except you, because you are his wife. How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?”* (Gen. 39:9)

Joseph went out of his way to avoid her. When he saw her coming, he would go the other way. He didn’t even want to be in the same room. But she was persistent. One day she made sure that they were the only two people in the house, and cornered him. Scripture says, *“She caught him by his cloak and said, “Come to bed with me!” But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.”* (Genesis 39:12)

When temptation came, Joseph didn’t linger, he didn’t mess around, he didn’t tell himself “I can handle it, I won’t cross the line.” He was wise enough to get out of there, as quickly as he could. That’s a good example for us to follow. When you see temptation coming, go the other way. The best way to avoid sexual sin is to keep your distance from situations where you know you will be tempted. 2 Timothy 2:22 tells us, *“Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.”*

2. We guard our hearts, by **keeping in mind the consequences** of sin.

Proverbs 6 tells us that the cost of being ensnared by lust is steep. Verses 27-29 asks: *“Can a man scoop fire into his lap without his clothes being burned? Can a man walk on hot coals without his feet being scorched? So is he who sleeps with another man’s wife; no one who touches her will go unpunished.”*

One of the problems of lust is that it makes a person blind, and foolish. It convinces him that he live a double life, and no one will ever know. It makes him believe that a few moments of forbidden pleasure are worth risking everything that he treasures. But it’s lie. Sooner or later it will all come crashing down. The person who plays with fire will eventually get burnt. Not only will he bring sorrow upon himself, but many other will get hurt in the process.

The price of adultery is far greater than a person might imagine. Verses 30-32 tell us: *“Men do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy his hunger when he is starving. Yet if he is caught, he must pay sevenfold, though it costs him all the wealth of his house. But a man who commits adultery lacks judgment; whoever does so destroys himself.”*

There is no restitution a man can pay to appease the wrath of an angry husband. If you lay your hands on another man's wife, he is going lay his hands on you. There is no gift that a man could give to his wife to make up for his transgression, when he has been unfaithful. He could send all the roses in the world, and it won't mean a thing. Consider some of the possible consequences of infidelity:

1. The man ensnared by lust is destroying his own marriage. He's not thinking about the irreparable damage his actions cause, and what he is potentially throwing away.
2. He is inflicting unimaginable pain on the woman he loves.
3. He is setting a poor example for his children. To his sons, he is not doing a very good job of showing the right way to treat women. And to his daughters, he is setting a pretty low standard for what to expect from a man.
4. He is also sabotaging someone else's marriage.
5. He might get the other woman pregnant.
6. He might end up contracting a sexually transmitted disease.
7. He is tarnishing his reputation in the community. People will look at him differently. "Oh, he's the guy who shacked up with so-and-so..."
8. He is destroying his Christian testimony. How will he be able to share the gospel when his actions deny the faith he proclaims?
9. And he is his hindering his relationship with Christ, the only one who can satisfy our soul's deepest desires. Every sinful relationship is an idol that steals our affection from Him.

I'm not trying to belabor the point, but I want to show that when we look at what you stand to gain compared with what you stand to lose, the cost is much too great. A number of years ago Charity and I were able to spend a week at a friend's timeshare in Florida. Part of the deal was that we had to sit through the sales pitch, and it was pretty good. They showed us all around the beautiful resort, all the amenities, and the benefits of being an owner. They almost had us convinced. In fact, we were in the manager's office, ready to sign on the dotted line, when we came to our senses. We just couldn't do it. The cost was too steep. It was a really nice place, but it would have cost us to "purchase" one week every other year plus maintenance fees. We realized that for us, it was just wasn't worth it. The cost of adultery is far too steep to pay. If you find yourself ensnared by lust think of the consequences and the price that you will have to pay.

3. We guard our hearts by keeping close to the Lord.

Again, Proverbs 6:20 reads: *“My son, keep your father’s commands and do not forsake your mother’s teaching.”*²¹ *Bind them upon your heart forever; fasten them around your neck.*²² *When you walk, they will guide you; when you sleep, they will watch over you...*

The father, here in these verses, is offering words of wisdom to his son because he cares about him. He is trying to steer the young man away from danger. He understands that young people do not always make good choices. They don’t have the life experience to guide them at pivotal moments, and so he is trying to equip his son for difficult decisions he might have to face. That’s what parents do. They are constantly watching over their children, warning them of potential dangers. We tell our little ones: “Don’t run with scissors. Don’t play in the road. Don’t put that in rock in your mouth.” It’s not that moms and dads are trying to ruin a good time. We tell them these things because we care about them, and don’t want to see them to get hurt.

Our Heavenly Father has the same intentions. And so we ought to take his commands seriously. Listen to what He has to say. These words are here for a reason. God is not trying to rain on anyone’s parade, or spoil a good time. He understands that intimacy is a very beautiful thing, in the right setting, but outside of marriage it has the potential to cause tremendous harm. He is trying to protect us.

Some people think the Bible is old fashioned when it comes to sex, that because we live in a different time and a different culture these instructions no longer apply. But they are mistaken. These are not old fashioned ideals, this is timeless truth. If anyone should know, it’s the Lord, because He is the One created men and women, and He is the author of marriage. He knows how it is supposed to work. It would be very foolish for us to think that we know better than God.

If we hide His Words in our heart, the Holy Spirit will bring these verses to our mind when we are tempted, helping us to overcome. And spending time in God’s Word also brings us closer in our relationship with Him. As our love for Him grows, the lusts of the world will no longer be as appealing to us. If we make the Lord the love of our life, there won’t be any room for an illicit affair.

The young man who tries to handle lust on his own will fail. We are not strong enough. But if we cling to the Lord He will give us the strength we need. We can pray for the Lord’s protection, to give us wisdom, and help us choose the right path. And He will respond. The NT tells us that when we are tempted, the Lord will provide the strength that we need to overcome. *“...God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”* (1 Cor. 10:13)

4. We guard our hearts by keeping the fire burning in our marriage.

Turn back a page to ***Proverbs 5:15-18***. *“Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.”*

There is a place for passion and intimacy - within the sacred bonds of marriage. Your wife ought to be the most beautiful woman in the world to you. Or your husband ought to be the most

handsome man in the world to you. If your heart belongs to your spouse, then you won't have wandering eyes.

Our world has the idea that romantic love is something that fades over time... that once a couple is married it's all downhill from there. But that shouldn't be. As husband and wife go through the ups and downs of life together, they should grow closer together, and fall deeper and deeper in love. Every once and awhile you see an elderly couple walking through the mall, holding hands, and that always makes me smile. That's a special thing. It is a testimony to the world that true love endures. I hope when Charity and I have been married for 50/60 years that we will be that couple.

We can allow ourselves to become complacent, in our marriage. We can choose to take our spouse for granted. We can dwell on their faults and their flaws. Or we can make an concerted effort to express our affection every day:

- When was the last time you wrote your wife a love letter?
- What about making a mix tape of her favorite love songs?
- Do you still go out on dates: to a restaurant or the movies?
- How often do you send her flowers?
- Do you tell your wife that she is beautiful?
- Do you tell your husband that you love him?

There are little things we can do to communicate how much your spouse means to you. A healthy marriage will help us guard against the snare of temptations.

The verses this morning warn us of the dangers of lust. We need to recognize that anyone can fall. Do not be so proud as to think that you are someone immune. Take appropriate precautions. Guard your heart. Make a covenant with your eyes not even look at another woman / not look at another man. When a sinful thought enters your mind, take that thought captive and refuse to entertain it any further. Make the Lord the greatest desire of your life. Yearn for intimacy with God. Do not let anything threaten that relationship. Seek help, when you find yourself pulled down that path or if you have fallen. Talk to a caring Christian friend who will help you, pray with you, and hold you accountable.

We've talked a lot this morning about guarding our heart, but we also need to remember that the Lord is able to heal our brokenness. When we stumble, He can lift us up, if we let Him. For those who have been ensnared by lust, know that there is freedom in Jesus Christ. For those who have fallen into sexual sin, remember that the Lord can pick up the pieces of our lives and make us whole again. Today is a new day. You don't have to continue down that destructive path. Lay your life in His hands and commit your ways to Him.