

Part 11: The War of Affections

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This past spring I purchased a pair of wireless headphones that I came to love and as I realized how fantastic they were, so too did my wife. So after she had a pair of headphones that broke she asked me if we could get her a good pair too.

So I went online and found the same pair I had purchased for nearly 70% off of the price I paid and I immediately bought one. They arrived within a couple weeks, but when I opened the package I realized that something felt off about this pair of headphones and I couldn't quite place it.

Something didn't feel right, so I went and got my own headphones and began to compare. The branding on the box Sarah received was the same branding as mine, but the box was a different shape. I then realized that the light on the front was a different color than mine. The pairing noise when you turned it on was a different sound than mine, and the voice that greeted you was a different voice than mine.

Within the first 10 minutes the case actually broke and it became very clear to me at this point that I had purchased a counterfeit pair of headphones. It promised all the quality of the original at a fraction of the price, but was made of materials unable to actually provide what was promised.

As we are concluding the end of Solomon's prologue in the book of Proverbs these last two sermons are two sermons meant to compare the authentic promise and pleasures of God and the counterfeit promise and pleasures of the world.

What was most helpful for me in determining that Sarah's headphones were counterfeit was to take out my original headphones and lay them side by side, to put them in my ear, and to listen to the quality of the music.

This is what Solomon is doing in these two passages: he's holding up the false call of Lady Folly to the true call of Lady Wisdom. But, here's the beauty of Proverbs: In order for me to learn that sometimes things are not what they seem, I had to pay the price of purchasing a counterfeit. But in the Proverbs, Solomon is going to do something wonderful with his language and stories. He is going to help get us to the same realization but he wants to do so without you having to experience the pain of purchasing a counterfeit.

Multiple times in our text today Solomon is going to speak to those who lack sense. This might sound like an insult, but ultimately this is written so that you might not be the one who lacks sense, but instead the one who hears, lives, and is wise.

What we are going to see today chapters seven and eight of Proverbs are four primary points. First we are going to see **The Compelling Power of Affection** and then we are going to see **Three Contrasts Between Lady Folly and Lady Wisdom**.

Now before we look at this powerful passage today we need to define our terms here. Proverbs is written in poetic form. Which means that Solomon and the other authors are using the power of words to create compelling images and metaphors to help their teaching take effect in our lives.

Wisdom in the book of Proverbs is learning to see the world through God's eyes. Wisdom isn't brilliance, wisdom is a reliance upon God and his ability to fulfill his promises. Wisdom trusts that if God set forth to save us in Jesus, then God's words are reliable to produce life in all of his instruction.

This commitment to God's faithfulness is personified in the prologue of Proverbs as a woman, we call this woman, "Lady Wisdom." She's not a real woman, but she stands as a metaphor for the attractive and faithful power of God's winsome wisdom.

Secondarily, foolishness in the book of Proverbs is not simply an intellectual lacking. The fool isn't the person who doesn't know the quadratic equation, the fool is the person who refuses to see the world through God's eyes. There are two types of fools, there are those who unknowingly walk in foolishness, and there are those who arrogantly walk in rebellion to God. Both are bad, both can be saved by the work of Jesus, but both are in equal danger on the path of life.

This rebellions or ignorant foolishness is also presented as a woman. She's often referred to as the strange woman, the foreign woman, or the adulteress, but in the closing part of the prologue Solomon exposes that these names are all names of the woman folly. In contrast to Lady Wisdom is Lady Folly.

And this is where we begin to put the basis together for our first point today: **The Compelling Power of Affection.**

In creating these two metaphorical women, Solomon is setting up a battle for your affection. Because of this, the language he uses in the metaphor is sexual language. This language is intended to do two things in our hearts.

First it stands to warn us of the danger of sexual sin in and of itself. In other words we should read this and consider its warning in areas of sex outside of marriage, pornography and lust. But secondly, Solomon is after far more than simply sexual purity. Anything that runs from God's faithful wisdom is spiritual adultery.

Here's the wonderful force this creates in our lives. It explains why we sin. We sin because in our hearts, whether that sin is sexual or not, we are impassioned for it, we want to sin. Sin preys on our affections and the beautiful metaphor Proverbs uses explains this in dramatic form.

This is also interesting to note because behind the call to wisdom and God's faithfulness is really the call to obedience and reliance upon God. When we think of this lifestyle we don't generally think of impassioned obedience. But here Solomon is showing us that walking in light of Jesus' love for you in the gospel is not a suppression of affection but actually the only right expression of it.

What I want to do just briefly is simply to read all of chapter 7. But as we read it this is what I want you to be listening for. I want you to listen for three things: 1. How does Lady Folly speak to our affections? 2. What happens to those who listen to Lady Folly? And 3. What does Solomon prescribe to protect our affections?

Read with me **Proverbs 7:1-27**.

Isn't this a powerful picture that the Solomon is painting for us as his children? Because here he shows us how Lady Folly gets ahold of our affections.

Solomon as the human author and God as the primary author of this text actually gives us the benefit of the doubt, but this helps stress the seriousness of this text. Yes, we might lack sense, yes night time isn't the most prudent time for a stroll. Yet despite all of this, the author is not alluding to the fact that these young men in this text went out looking for sin.

Sin snuck up on them. He's seen it time and time again. Those who are not cautious are overcome not by a notorious conviction to sin on the front end, but instead by the surprise attack sin plays on their affection.

Did you notice the words used to describe this affectionate attack: the Lady meets him, seizes him, kisses him, persuades him and compels him with this wonderfully attractive message which promises the full sensory experience of food, comfort, pleasure and boundless love.

Isn't this how sin often works in our own hearts? Few of us wake up in the morning and say, "What are some ways I can show God that I don't trust that he is actually able to save me or satisfy me in the gospel?"

But instead we walk through life and we are grabbed by the power of sinful temptation and if we are one who lacks sense, our affections are wooed by the monologue of Lady Folly.

We end up in her room, but we don't realize that all who end up there end up dead. At once, Solomon says in verse 22, you are lead as an ox to the slaughter, a stag to the hunters table, and a bird in a trap. Sin promises delight but pays in death.

This illustration doesn't instill in us great confidence does it? Sin deceives us to make us think it is for us, but in Genesis 4:7 God tells Cain that, "Sin is crouching at the door and its desire is contrary to you."

So how do we navigate the world in which it seems that we will so often have our affections preyed upon by things which actually harm us? Is the goal to crush our affections and turn away all desires for pleasure?

No. Look back at **Proverbs 7:1-4**. To fight the affection of Lady Folly and her sneak attack, we are to have a surpassing and intimate affection for God's wisdom. The victory in the battle for your affection is not one by white-knuckle repression, but instead by intimate rejoicing in God's better love held out for you in Jesus.

Brian Hedges, in his book "Christ Formed in You," provides a stunning example of what this is like. He alludes to two stories in literature, both of which portray seafarers and mythical sirens.

Like Lady Folly, these Sirens sang a beautiful song that enticed sailors to come closer but when they did, the Sirens would kill the sailors.

So the First Captain knew the risk of the sirens but also knew the beauty of their song, so he asked his men to chain him to the mast and then he had wax poured into the ears of all his rowers. The Second Captain also knew the risk of the sirens so he hired the most beautiful harp player in the land to board the ship.

When the first man crossed the waters the siren song was heard by him but not by his rowers who had their ears plugged. So the boat made it safely through, but the captain went mad chained to the mast. He heard their song and wanted to follow it so badly, restrained painfully by the chains and tortured by the promise of pleasure.

When the second man crossed the waters and heard the song, he ordered the harpist to play her instrument. The boat safely made it through not because anyone was tortured by the sirens, but because they found the song of the harpist more beautiful than the song of the siren.

In the battle you have against sin, I wonder how many of us see the danger of sin but still think we are losing out. How many of us have already lost the war of affection by thinking, "Sure hell is bad and God is good, but man, if only I could live like that?"

Such thinking will cause you to fall to the assault of Lady Folly nearly every time. But what Solomon proposes instead is that we learn to hear the surpassing song and be satisfied by the faithful intimacy of Lady Wisdom. He wants us to take out the original and compare it with the counterfeit.

This is where we enter into chapter eight which is what one commentator called "Wisdom's Autobiography."

This is where we hear a monologue from Lady Wisdom which just like my headphones shows the flaws of the counterfeit, and just like the harpist shows the surpassing delight of trusting in God.

This is where we get into our second point: **Three Contrasts Between Lady Folly and Lady Wisdom**

Read with me first: **Proverbs 8:1-11.**

Here we see our first contrast: ***Sin is Corrupt, Wisdom is True.***

In this passage we see Lady Wisdom talking about the quality of her own words. Look back at how she describes her language in **Proverbs 8:6-9.**

In the course of all our church has gone through lately with the purchase of the Coke building and City, I've seen a lot of legal documents.

In those documents I've read them and had others read them to make sure that we weren't being taken advantage of, that we weren't agreeing to things which would ultimately conceal a poor decision or hidden clause which might hurt us.

Our society is bathed in legal language not because lawyers were looking for jobs, but because we know how devious our hearts are. We know how to present ourselves as one thing scheming for something else.

Sin is the master schemer. Speaking of the Devil look at how Jesus describes him in **John 8:44**.

Don't we see this deceptive and manipulative power of Satan in Lady Folly? She comes to us dressed as a prostitute, though she is a wife of another man. Solomon says in verse 10 that she is "wily of heart." She doesn't let you know her true motives.

In her wake is a mighty throng of people just like you who bought into her pyramid scheme, led by affection, leaving in devastation.

In contrast to the promise of sin is the truthfulness of the gospel. What God gives us in his word, and what God has proved for us in the substitute of Jesus in our place, is that he knows what is true and righteous. He knows what is good, and in his word there is no lie.

Look at the promise of God found for you in **Psalm 37:3-6**.

Why is it that we trust the corrupt pleasures of sin, but doubt the God who says he holds pleasures forevermore? Paul says this in Romans 8, "If God did not spare his son to save us, how will he not also with Jesus graciously give us all things?"

Many of us are met unprepared by the sneak attacks of sin because we may trust God with our salvation in Jesus, but we don't trust Jesus with our satisfaction. But the Bible makes it clear that to be restored to God in Jesus is so rewarding that you'll throw away all your riches if only to know God more.

The second contrast is seen in **Proverbs 8:12-21**.

Here we see ***Sin is Faithless, Wisdom is Faithful***.

Look back at what Lady Folly says to us when she grabs us: **Proverbs 7:18**.

What a great promise! But what's the problem behind this promise? Look at what comes next **Proverbs 7:18-19a**.

She has a husband!

What does this tell us? It tells us that though she offers love, her love is fickle. Even the man she has covenanted to love, her husband, is no longer loved by her.

But this is the danger of sin, we get tunnel vision with it and we think that any sin that grabs our affections is unique love at first sight which only a fool would turn down. "No one has what we have!"

But the call of sin's love is filled with an inability to actually love. The wise man would look at this woman and say, "If you're not faithful to your husband, that what says your love will be faithful to me?"

The wise Christian looks at the promise of sin and says, "If you haven't satisfied me before, if you haven't faithfully cared for me before, why should I believe your promise this time?" For can't you look back at your own sin and see that it never faithfully provided its love? Can't you look out at people in our culture who have sinned in the way you are tempted and who still long for something more?

This is the blessing of the church! How many of us look to reviews of movies or products before we buy them? Yet how many of us turn to our brothers and sisters in the church when sin is pandering to us? There are those in here who can say to you, "I've been in that room, and it's all a lie."

Sin is never faithful except to harm.

But Lady Wisdom is the basis of faithfulness. By her Kings reign and Princes rule. It is the tried moral fabric of a society. Wisdom consistently causes justice to flourish, counsel, strength and peace to increase.

More than that look at the promise of wisdom: **Proverbs 8:17-21.**

Why should you run to Jesus over and over again? Because if you come to Jesus in faith he will not turn you away. He loves those who love him. Sin will leave empty the moment you leave her presence but Jesus faithfully loves those who seek after him. He alone promises an inheritance of security which the economy of life cannot touch.

If you have been left empty by the promise of sin look to the promise of salvation in Jesus and realize that he will hold forever those who come to him in faith.

Lastly read with me **Proverbs 8:22-31.**

Here we see that **Sin is Fleeting, Wisdom is Forever.**

I love what Solomon does here because it's so obvious when we see it

Do you remember all the things Lady Folly offered? She offers the full lineup of bar-b-que meats she has left from her sacrifices. She offers soft linens, sweets smells, and seductive pleasures.

But look at what else she says: **Proverbs 7:19-20.**

Why is this ridiculous? Well not only because Solomon says this little romp in the hay will cost you your life. But also because there's an expiration date! Her husband will come back!

Don't we think that the pleasures of sin will last us as long as we want! But illicit goods never last. It's for but a moment.

Whatever sin you enjoy will someday meet its end. Like the Prodigal Son it might be when the money dries up. Like Jonah it might be when your future is seemingly swallowed up. Like the men in this text it might be when the husband comes back. But more so and universally our sin will show its futility when Jesus comes back to judge the living and the dead.

The wages of life spent in this room is death.

Yet the pleasures of wisdom are forever more. Here wisdom shows her durability and enduring power. She was from God of the beginning, she preexisted the world and is now guiding the world in daily activities from the call in your heart to the crash of the tides.

More than that look at what she says about her relationship to God and to us: **Proverbs 8:30-31**.

Wisdom delighted God himself. How arrogant and lacking in sense must you be to think that your palette for delight is more refined than the God who made it? How wonderful is wisdom? Wonderful enough for God to delight in it, and more than that wisdom herself has taken delight in the children of man.

This is absolutely staggering to think about. Wisdom wants to delight in you. In fact wisdom here does delight in you. And how do you see her delight? In her call for you, in her affectionate appeal to call you off the street and into her own home.

Look at her closing appeal which is rooted in God's delight and your delight: **Proverbs 8:32-36**.

How do we experience the delight of God in the affection of wisdom? We simply come. We find it and we find life.

Don't we see what this text inevitably points to?

Look at what Jesus says in **John 10:7-11**.

Here we see the wise man's object of redeeming affection: Jesus our loving, life giving shepherd.

For those who have tasted death in the room of sin, this lover has promised to taste death for you on the cross.

For those who know not where to run when sin calls, run to Jesus. For it is he who walks in the way of righteousness and in the path of justice.

When we don't know where to go, we can know to whom we should go. If we run to Jesus when sin sings its affectionate song we not only find him, but we find grace, and we find the way of obedience which leads to life and life abundantly.

So today, let us see the beauty of God's original love in Jesus Christ and let us take our fill of him and be satisfied in his love by turning to him, repenting of our sin and listening to his voice.