**The Wise Intoxication of Marriage**

Text: Proverbs 5

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**Scriptures:** Ephesians 5:15-33; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5; Proverbs 5

**Songs Chosen:** [SttL]201, 184, 45, All I have is Christ[[1]](#footnote-1), 353

**Series:** **Proverbs**. Sermon 6.

**Theme:** The wise father warns his son about the deadly dangers of adultery in contrast to the blessed pleasures of faithfulness in marriage

**Proposition:** Be intoxicated with the love of Christ

**Introduction**

To be intoxicated is ‘to lose control of your faculties or behaviour’ – so my English dictionary informs me. To be intoxicated is to be like a drunkard.

Before the technological development of sophisticated breath-testing for suspected drink-driving, a simple sobriety test was required – to walk steadily along a straight line on the road without swerving, meandering or straying from that line. **Proverbs 20:1** warns that “*Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise*”. The Hebrew word translated here ‘led astray’ (shanah), can also be translated ‘swerve’, ‘meander’ or ‘intoxicated’ as in the NASB version i.e. *‘whoever is intoxicated by it (alcohol) is not wise*’.

Our topic from Proverbs 5 this morning is not drunkenness, but marriage - the faithful union of a man and woman in holy matrimony until ‘death do them part’. What, you may ask, has intoxication got to do with marriage?, well, more than you might think.

Let’s have a look at Proverbs 5 and see! - under the headings:

1. The joy of faithfulness

2. The pains of unfaithfulness

3. The intoxicating love of Christ

1. **The joy of faithfulness**

Did you know that the toothbrush, as we know it today, was not invented until 1938! However, early forms of the toothbrush have been in existence since around 3000 BC. Ancient civilizations used a "chew stick," which was a thin twig with a frayed end used to rub against the teeth in order to clean them.

Now picture this. You go to clean your teeth and realise that somebody else has cleaned their teeth with your brush! Now I know that at times family members may share a toothbrush in emergencies, but few would share with a stranger. Why? because the inside of your mouth is a private, intimate, part of your body. It’s not somewhere you want a stranger to go!

In Proverbs chapter 5, a wise father in instructing his son to be faithful in marriage to his wife. In v15-19 he describes the joy of being faithful in marriage. He could perhaps have said in v15 “only use your own chew stick to clean your teeth’, or in today’s terminology “only use your own toothbrush”. However, more poetically, in a way which would be widely understood in the Ancient Near East he says: “*Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well*” (Prov 5.15).

A cistern is a waterproof container for storing liquid, generally underground. These were commonplace in OT times (perhaps more so that chew sticks). You may remember when Jeremiah was lowered into the empty cistern of Malchiah as a punishment for speaking the true Word of God (Jer 38:6). Here the metaphor of a personal household water supply is used to convey the wisdom of a man being faithful in physical marital relations with his wife.

He should not be intimately involved with anyone other than his own wife. A husband is unwise (and unfaithful!) if he has sexual relationships with anyone else. Proverbs 5:16-17 puts this truth this way“*Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone, and not for strangers with you*”. Being promiscuous, having multiple sexual partners, is not only sinful but is also wasteful of God’s good gifts in life. Cellphone apps like Tinder have turned God’s good gift of sexuality into a curse.

Many people today, and in times past, believe that restricting yourself to only having a sexual relationship with one person (your own husband or your own wife) means that you are ‘short-changing’ yourself of living a more enjoyable, satisfying life. They are wrong!

In our text, the wise father does not want his son to think that being faithful in marriage is dull, boring, or is some miserly divine rule to reduce potential pleasure fulfilment in life…far from it! Listen to the Word of God: **“***Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love*” (Prov 5:18). The language here reminds us of Song of Solomon, it is graphic, erotic and may well make us feel a little uncomfortable! Yet here it is, in the Bible - for our instruction. For our edification. For our continued growth in holiness.

What then is the message of this vivid, evocative, poetry? I can tell you that the doe here is likely an Iranian fallow deer which is pale red, or brown-grey in colour, has speckled spots over the shoulder and is under a meter in height. This does not mean that a husband should necessarily desire a very small wife with spots on her shoulders! No! The image is of a delicate, graceful and very attractive creature. The whole picture here in Proverbs 5 is of a fertile, vibrant, fulfilling sexual relationship between a faithful husband and his faithful wife.

Notice that this is an **intoxicating** marriage union. The idea here is **not** that of drunkenness, but of an intimate relationship in which there is such closeness and trust that husband and wife can safely be uninhibited in the marriage bed together with each other. They can thereby experience a unique excitement and pleasure together. Their love for one another so faithful that they can completely let their ‘guard down’ with one another in complete safety and security.

This ‘holy intoxication’ with one another is the physical expression of the deepest and most intimate human relationship that it is possible to have in this life – that of a man and a woman in the ‘one-flesh’ union of marriage.

Lest we perhaps think that this is just some idyllic OT concept, we see a similar truth expressed in the NT: In the 1st century ‘sex-saturated’ culture of Corinth, where prostitution and promiscuity were rampant (e.g. 1 Cor 5:1-8; 6:15-16), the Apostle Paul writes: **“***The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does*” (1 Cor 7:3-4). (The word ‘conjugal’ means relating to marriage or the relationship between a married couple and here refers to sexual intimacy).

Again, the relationship between husband and wife is to be so close, and so trusting that each willingly yields to the other complete authority over their own body. Not only is this intoxication a source of deep joy, satisfaction, fulfilment and divinely blessed pleasure, it is also the most effective way of countering any temptation to marital unfaithfulness.

Proverbs chapter 5, together with 6&7 warns those who will listen about the pains of unfaithfulness in marriage, which is our 2nd point:

1. **The pains of unfaithfulness**

God created us all with desires and when those desires are satisfied we experience pleasure. God intends that our good desires are wisely met so that we can enjoy the blessings which He provides.

However, in this fallen world, it is very often true that indulging in sinful behaviour brings us pleasure. Ask the glutton who has consumed copious quantities of rich food and feels full. Ask the drug taker who experiences the ‘high’ of an altered state of mind. Ask the pornography or prostitute user whose sexual desire has been satisfied.

Ask yourself ‘why do I sin’? Why am I proud? Why am I lazy? Why am I greedy? Why am I judgemental? Why am I impatient? Why am I discontent? Why am I unrighteously angry? Why am I bitter? The curious answer, in a strange way, is because it makes you feel good. Sadly, it brings a perverted pleasure to the sinner’ s fallen heart and mind. Brothers and sisters, friends - our desire for satisfaction (in ways that are not wise) is why we sin!

In Proverbs 5, the wise father is describing adultery, marital unfaithfulness, and he acknowledges that this brings pleasure. The ‘forbidden’ (literally ‘strange’) woman is **very attractive** to the unwise observer who lacks understanding and discretion. She tastes sweet like honey on the lips and she sounds delightful with ‘smooth speech’ which is very pleasurable to hear.

As you will most likely know, the ‘Venus Flytrap’ is a carnivorous plant which catches prey – chiefly insects and spiders. The unsuspecting victims are attracted by the sweet nectar which the plan secretes. Once the creatures land on the leaves, they trip the trigger hairs on the outside of the traps. This causes the cells in the leaves to expand. In less than a second, the leaves shut and the deadly digestive processes of the Venus Flytrap begin!

That is how it tends to go with unfaithfulness in marriage. At first it can seem so attractive, there’s another woman or man who appears to look and talk so much better than the person you are married to…sweet and smooth. It may begin with sharing a ride in a car, casual conversations at work, a friendship which develops into a close, intimate, relationship with someone of the opposite gender (or even perhaps of the same sex). It may seem harmless. It will be pleasant. It may provide a welcome relief from difficulties within your own marriage. It may well provide a satisfying relationship in contrast to troubles at home. Then, before you know it, you are trapped…like an insect inside the deathly embrace of a carnivorous plant!

This is how the pain of entrapment and devastating loss is expressed in Proverbs 5:4-5 as the ‘sting’ of the forbidden woman is felt. “*but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps follow the path to Sheol*”

The pains of unfaithfulness in marriage include:

1. The loss of wealth and honour (v9 and 10)
2. The agonising realization that wise advice was ignored (13)
3. That a self-disciplined life has been abandoned (v12)
4. The growing awareness that you only have yourself to blame for the ruin in your life
5. A public shame in the congregation (v14)
6. A bitter end to life (v11)

Are these always the pains which **always**, necessarily, result from unfaithfulness in marriage? No. Remember the proverbs are **not** a mathematical formula like 2+2=4! However, it is always true that seeking the quick pleasure of any sin leads more and more to an **entangled life** where true freedom is ultimately lost. This is expressed in v22-23: “*The iniquities of the wicked ensnare him, and he is held fast in the cords of his sin*. *He dies for lack of discipline, and because of his great folly he is led astray”.* We could say that the adulterer is intoxicated by his lack of wisdom.

Young, unmarried children and youth be attentive to the wisdom of God who desires that you listen to His voice for your own good. Commit to keeping yourself sexually pure whilst you are single for however long that may be – until marriage or throughout a single life – whatever the Lord’s will for you may be. “*Know how to control your own body in holiness and honour, not in the passion of lust*” (1 Thess 4:4). “*God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness*” (1 Thess 4:7)

This is a completely opposite message to that of the unbelieving world which says, “If it feels good just do it!” This call to holiness is not worldly wisdom, but wisdom from above, wisdom from God (James 3:15). The path of holiness is the right and narrow path which leads to life.

Married men and women, ‘drink water from your own cistern’. Or to put the metaphor another way ‘only clean your teeth with your own toothbrush’!

Let us **all** heed these wise warnings. As the Apostle Paul writes to the believers living in a sensuous society full of ‘forbidden’ women with their honey lips and alluring speech (there would have been men like this there too!): **“***Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. 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 10:12)

Marital unfaithfulness brings many pains to the sinner who goes astray, intoxicated with the ‘forbidden’ woman or man. Marital unfaithfulness brings many pains to those around the sinner who goes astray, in their family and their church.

How can we avoid the pains of unfaithfulness in the area of sexual sin, and in other sins in which we find momentary pleasure? By giving ourselves over completely to the intoxicating love of Christ…. our 3rd point.

1. **The intoxicating love of Christ**

What do you think the opening question I ask in pre-marriage counselling is?

Do you love one another? Have you organized a venue for the ceremony?

Have you kept yourself sexually pure?

These are all worthwhile questions, but I begin with:

What are the goals of marriage?

How would you answer that question?

Here are the 3 keys purposes given in Scripture:

a) **Having children** – ‘procreation’ Gen 1:28 “*Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth*”. This goal is not God’s will for every man and woman. Some are called to singleness. Some are not blessed with being able to have children. However, all who marry should have this goal whilst knowing that the Lord may or may not bless them with fruitfulness in having children.

b) **Close companionship** Gen 2:18 “*It is not good that the man should be alone*”. Marriage is an intimate one-flesh union physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. As we’ve seen from our text, the marriage relationship is designed by God to be a uniquely close union where husband and wife are so much at peace and ease with one another that they willingly submit their own bodies to be under the authority of the other person. In this way marriage is a relationship of mutual submission for the benefit of the other person.

c) **A living visible image** to be presented to the church and to the world of the intimate union between Christ and His bride, the church (Eph 5:25,32).

This is one key reason why believers are only to marry believers. In a ‘mixed-marriage’ of a Christian and a non-Christian, husband and wife cannot fulfil this 3rd purpose of Christian marriage. Young and not-so young single people. Resolve in your heart that you will not pursue a close relationship with someone who is not committed to Christ. Do not compromise your future joy, pleasure and satisfaction of being able to enjoy all the blessings of a marriage union which is modelled on the relationship between Christ and His church for whom He died.

Whenever we think about marriage from a Biblical perspective, we are pointed to the gospel and reminded of the faithful love of Christ. The marriage union between husband and wife is to mirror the intimate relationship between Christ, the Heavenly Bridegroom and the church, his bride: “*For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish*” (Eph 5:23-27).

It is possible that you are someone today who is married, but who does not enjoy the intoxicating pleasures of a close physical relationship with your wife or husband. There may be many reasons for this, including: ill-health, frailty, the effects of ageing, unresolved tension or difficulty in the marriage relationship, pressures and stresses of work, family life, or other struggles.

The holy intoxication of a husband and wife together in love may be lost or put aside for a period for many reasons. The Apostle Paul gives one situation in particular when he says: “*Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again*” (1 Cor 7:5). A desire for an intense time of seeking the Lord may put physical intimacy ‘on hold’ for a period – to be resumed, but not suspended indefinitely.

You may be a single person here today, either because you have never married, because you are a widow or widower, or you may be divorced. You may be married but the physical relationship with your husband or wife does not reflect the delight of our text. You may be finding this sermon particularly difficult to listen to. You may be painfully reminded of what you currently do not have. If you do not find, or have not yet had, the intoxicating self-abandoning love in a marriage relationship for whatever reason, what should you do? Answer: **come to Christ and enjoy His intoxicating love**.

If you do enjoy an intimate one-flesh union with your husband or wife and desire that this last for as long as you both shall live, what should you do? Answer: **come to Christ and enjoy His intoxicating love**. He is the Heavenly Bridegroom of whom it is wonderfully true that **“***His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend*” (Song of Solomon 5:16).

If you currently do enjoy a marriage where you are intoxicated with the love of your husband or wife, praise God! What you enjoy points you to the even more intoxicating love of Christ to be experienced in union with Him.

Whatever your situation in life today, you can abandon yourself with Christ, you can ‘let your guard down’ with Him. You can fully trust Him, not only with your body, but also with your very soul. With Christ who knows you better than you know yourself, you can enjoy the closest intimacy, the deepest love. You can ‘abandon’ yourself to Him, acknowledging His complete authority over you, body and soul.

If your own marriage relationship is currently less than intoxicating, then yielding yourself fully to Christ will help you to be faithful and to do everything you can to strengthen your marriage union, irrespective of how your husband or wife may respond. Brothers and sisters, whatever your situation in life today, bind yourselves to the Heavenly Bridegroom who says to His bride: "*Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls*” (Matt 11:29)

The Apostle Paul describes the intoxication of Christ this way: **“***I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me*” (Gal 2:20)

Brothers and sisters in Christ, because He is yours and you are His, you can delight and rejoice in your union with Him. You can be intoxicated in His faithful love.

I don’t know the details of your private life. The areas where you may have yielded to sin, sexual or otherwise. I don’t know whether you are currently entangled and are heading down the path that leads to death…But the Lord knows, as v21 wisely reminds us, **“***For a man's ways are before the eyes of the LORD, and he ponders all his paths*” (Prov 5:21).

If you are someone today who has gone astray, you have become unwisely intoxicated with sin, sexual or otherwise. Turn away from the ‘forbidden woman’ who tasted and sounded sweet and smooth at first, but who now drags you down. Repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. He will accept you as you are, broken, humbly acknowledging how you did not listen to his voice. He will receive you and love you with a satisfying, enjoyable, intimate love like none other. Commit yourself today to walk the straight, narrow path which leads upwards to eternal joy, satisfaction and pleasure in Christ. Yield yourself up to the intoxicating love of Christ, so that he can direct your path in life.

He is faithful, He will do it!

Amen.

1. S.I. Presbytery approved [↑](#footnote-ref-1)