

# Proverbs 5:7-14

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/prov/prov-5/proverbs-57-14/>

*When we entertain the temptation of evil, we find it is a slippery slope that can steal us away before we know what has happened. We quickly forfeit vibrant living and drift into the path of death.*

Verse 7 initiates another reset to remind Solomon's audience to focus on the value of The Book of Proverbs and the pursuit of wisdom. He implores, *now then, my sons, listen to me*. As a response to what was outlined in the previous section ([see notes on Proverbs 5:1-6](#)), Solomon is regrouping. The previous section warned against listening to the tempting, superficial voice of the adulteress. That ends in death (separation). Therefore, *listen to me and do not depart from the words of my mouth*. The other option is to listen to the un-truths of the adulteress. It is a binary choice.

This is clear in the following verse. Solomon warns directly, *keep your way from her and do not go near the door of her house*. The message is not to just steer clear of wickedness but to stay far from it. To not go anywhere *near* it. Keep your distance. It is difficult to stand at a door and not enter into it. It is difficult to see the door and not want to go near it. So just stay away. *Do not go near the door of her house*. "I will go near but not go in" is a first step toward going in. Going in means falling into her arms. Rather than telling ourselves "I am just curious" and starting down that path, we should tell ourselves "That is death, I want to stay as far away as possible." Don't in any way tempt yourself by straying anywhere near the *door* of her *house*.

In this metaphor, the *house* of the adulteress likely represents any place of settling down with her. Making her a companion, a part of our life. In our modern age, the adulteress can be one person or a string of sexual temptations. The adulteress can also be an image on a screen or in a book. Pornography is well-documented as a means of death, or separation. It separates us from reality, pulling us into an imaginary world. It separates us from real people and real relationships. It robs us of *vigor*, siphoning away our productivity to stare at a screen and live in an imaginary world. In our modern age, the door of temptation is sitting on our desk or resting in our pocket. "Staying away" will likely require intentional actions that lead to accountability. The pop-up ads lure us, inviting us to come in, just to take a peek. Its goal is to get us to leave reality behind, take off our shoes and settle in.

If one does not heed the advice to steer clear, *you will give your vigor to others and your years to the cruel one*. Entering the door of the adulteress leads to giving *your years to the cruel one*. Once you start down a path, a pattern is established and the time in the pattern may slip by quickly. Wickedness can steal moments and days, even *years*, from your life. Like being lost in an enchantment, you surrender your life and it disappears from you.

*You will give your vigor to others* indicates what's occurring as the sands of time slip away. Your energy is diverted from activities that would be fulfilling and instead are dispersed on chasing your own appetites. In time, our appetites become our master. Most translations render the word

*vigor* as “honor.” Your reputation, what you could have accomplished during your life, is transferred to the computer screen, the trafficker, and the temptress. Rather than spending time and energy on your own wife and family, gaining the honor of being a faithful steward who will be rewarded by God for persevering in doing good works, the honor is squandered on behalf of self-serving ways (Romans 2:6-8). You will also influence others to follow your way, becoming a witness for the *cruel one* to whom you have surrendered your honor.

*The cruel one* is an allusion to Satan and the powers of evil, which are often represented in our own flesh. By choosing these ways, we choose Satan and our own appetites over God; we choose falsity over truth, death over life. As James states, temptation comes from our own lust.

“Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.”  
(James 1:15)

James echoes these Proverbs of Solomon. James’ solution is to put “aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls” (or lives) from the lust that lurks within, that desires to rule us. To steal our *vigor*, our honor, and give our *years to the cruel one*.

Another result of following the ways of wickedness is that *strangers will be filled with your strength*. This phrase is similar to some of the verses in Ecclesiastes (including Ecclesiastes 2:18-22) where the hard work of a person is left to someone who “comes after him.” The next phrase basically says the same thing: *your hard-earned goods will go to the house of an alien*. The idea here is also stated in chapter 6 of Ecclesiastes:

“God gives some people wealth, possessions and honor, so that they lack nothing their hearts desire, but God does not grant them the ability to enjoy them, and strangers enjoy them instead.”  
(Eccl. 6:2)

The sad reality is that following the alternative path, apart from wisdom, robs us of the joy of life; the meaning and opportunity of it is squandered by its possessors. If we follow the way of wickedness, giving in to the temptation of the *adulteress*, we forfeit our ability to enjoy life for all it is worth. We transfer whatever bounty we might enjoy to *strangers*. Perhaps to those who sell pornography, to the trafficker who enslaves the prostitute, or to the tempter or temptress who desires to extract something from us.

Throughout Proverbs, *stranger* is often used in reference to the *adulteress (strange woman)*. She represents a reversal from both the way of a mother’s teaching and the way of a virtuous wife. In Proverbs 5:3, Solomon references this adulteress. It is the foundation for his warnings throughout the chapter. The *adulteress* is likely a literal warning as well as a symbol of all teachings that differ from those of Lady Wisdom. Lady Wisdom is like a caring mother or a virtuous wife, who loves you and has your best interest at heart. The *strange woman* only seeks to extract—to transform your own life and possessions for her own end.

So when we get to verse 10—*and strangers will be filled with your strength*—the word *strangers* is a reference to this kind of adultery—a drifting from that which is best for you, from that which you were created to be. In this regard, Solomon is warning not to give ourselves over to the lies of temptation. To do so is to depart from reality and hand over one’s existence to a lie, a *stranger*.

As this pattern continues, the misery of the wicked increases. When the affair with the *adulteress* is over, it ends in misery. You *groan at your final end*. The misery is not magically reprieved at the last minute. The journey ends in a *groan*, a half-hearted, lifeless, meaningless grunt. The *end* is *when your flesh and body are consumed*. Rather than being transformed, as occurs for the righteous, the opportunity of a bountiful life is squandered and then snuffed. Only suffering remains.

Only after the fact, much too late, *you say*, “*How I have hated instruction! And my heart spurned reproof!*” The realization comes after the journey is over, and the time of opportunity is passed. And the lament you will have will be that you did not listen to *instruction*. In fact, you *hated* it, turning away from it in derision. You *spurned reproof*, turning aside opportunities to learn and grow. And the result was that *your flesh and body are consumed* and you are left to *groan*. This is the destination the path of wickedness leads to.

The lament of the *consumed* continues in verses 13 and 14. After the general epiphany that he hated *instruction* and spurned *reproof*, the lamenter gets more specific. *I have not listened to the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to my instructors*. A thinly veiled reference to Solomon himself and The Book of Proverbs. He has referenced himself in these roles in previous chapters. Solomon is making the binary choice between wisdom and folly quite clear. The destination of the path of wisdom is fulfillment and joy. The destination for the path of wickedness is misery, regret, and destruction. But in all this Solomon makes clear to his students: “It is your choice.” Solomon does not attempt to control or manipulate. Only to make clear the consequences of their choices.

The lament of the person who has reached the empty and destructive end of the “affair” with the *adulteress* takes a curious turn in verse 14. The lamenter says: *I was almost in utter ruin in the midst of the assembly and congregation*. The Hebrew word for *almost* is “me’at” and it means “little/only a few.” The next Hebrew word is “ra’,” translated here as *utter ruin*—it is most often translated as “evil.” So, the phrase *almost in utter ruin* literally means “just a little bit of evil.” It seems as though the lamenter is trying to make the case that they were not fully committed to evil. They were just doing it a little, not in *utter ruin* or anything. Of course, this defensive justification does not work and indicates the lack of awareness/engagement with reality evil brings on.

The lamenter can’t seem to understand why he is so lost. He just wanted to try a little evil. After all, he was *in the midst of the congregation and assembly*. He was not hiding. He was also surrounded by those bearing witness to the truth and chose to ignore them. But Solomon makes it clear that his is a binary choice. Adding a “little bit of evil” is choosing the path of evil. Jesus made this same point with respect to evil, using the example of leaven, or yeast. Jesus noted that

bread rises (changes its entire nature) with a very small amount of yeast. This is what false teaching leads to (Matthew 16:11-12).

The lamenter chose the path of evil while maintaining, "I am ok, I still go to church and fit in with the righteous crowd." But hidden sin still leads to dire consequences. The consequence for any sin is death, separation, and loss (Romans 6:23). The lamenter has found himself separated from the life he desired and now is full of regret. For the lamenter in verse 14, his regret seems mainly to be that he didn't get away with it. But that is the way of sin, it perverts reality and warps perspective. It inevitably leads to a world of hurt.

### **Biblical Text**

**7 Now then, my sons, listen to me  
And do not depart from the words of my mouth.  
8 Keep your way far from her  
And do not go near the door of her house,  
9 Or you will give your vigor to others  
And your years to the cruel one;  
10 And strangers will be filled with your strength  
And your hard-earned goods will go to the house of an alien;  
11 And you groan at your final end,  
When your flesh and your body are consumed;  
12 And you say, "How I have hated instruction!  
And my heart spurned reproof!  
13 I have not listened to the voice of my teachers,  
Nor inclined my ear to my instructors!  
14 I was almost in utter ruin  
In the midst of the assembly and congregation."**