

A Commentary on the Book of Proverbs

Chapter 5:1-23: One is Lost because of Great Folly

Verses 1-14: Adulterous intentions and Misery: The wise person continues to instruct the youth or seeker of wisdom in marital relationship. The 'loose woman/strange woman' is used both literally and as a metaphor. In a patriarchal society, son/sons were the focus of attention and warnings and woman had more of a subservient role. Man's infatuations, deviations were thought of caused by a woman [Eve as seductress who tempted Adam to sin]! Both man and woman are equally responsible for extramarital affairs. A married person is warned that infidelity to marriage vows will result in misery and loss of strength, wealth, hard-earned reputation. Adultery is self-destruction, bitter end [wormwood]! In Proverbs, woman is personified as wisdom and also as folly. Drinking from infidelity, one comes very late to his/her senses-already crushed. One who is committed to fidelity in marriage follows wisdom, use discretion in situations of temptations. The imprudent one follows folly, destroys marriage and it is deadly! Wisdom warns the boundaries one must not cross in marriage. Proper use of freedom implies obedience to commandments of God!

Verses 15-23: Warning against Adultery/'Drink from one's own source': Proverbs emphasize on the joy of loving, faithful commitment in marriage. Husband's adulterous ways might lead to promiscuity of his wife; waywardness of husband would tempt the wife to lose her path of wisdom. Metaphors of cistern, spring [water] are used to explain the delight of human sexuality in marriage. Infidelity in marriage is poisoning the well, making water flow all over the place. 'Letting spring [water] flow in the streets' also indicates man/woman seeking sexual pleasure outside marriage. A faithful wife's beauty and attractiveness is praised and she is described as a 'fountain' of blessing, joy of the household. One destroys the way of wisdom when strays or falls into the trap of 'strange woman/man'! Well-being in family, joy in marital relationship requires fidelity.

The sin of infidelity brings shame in the family and community. True love between husband and wife is like marrying wisdom. It is modelled after God's covenant relationship with Israel. Marital love is a divine gift and fidelity in marriage is rewarded by blessings, peace. The concern of Proverbs in this chapter is mainly male promiscuity and how it destroys family. 'Everything is permissible' attitude is a residue for exploitation [prostitution, human trafficking] and not wise use of freedom. All human basic drives need to be disciplined for well-being in life. Break wisdom's boundaries is to scatter blessings. 'A man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord' [verse 21], reminding that life moves in God and his wisdom must direct life; this wisdom signifies what is dignified, noble and true about life. Married people must adhere to wisdom's discipline, correction! They shouldn't be like a 'spider strangely stuck in the web [infidelity] it has spun'!

Wish you a Blessed Lent!

Father Jose