

# Proverbs 2:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.

## Analysis

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**For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead.** This verse continues the warning against the "strange woman" (adulteress/seductress) begun in verse 16. "Her house" (beytah, בֵּיתָה) refers to the adulteress's dwelling, which becomes a metaphor for her entire lifestyle and influence. "Inclineth" (shachah, שָׁחַח) means to sink down, bow down, or decline—indicating a downward trajectory toward destruction.

"Death" (mavet, מֵתָה) is not merely physical death but spiritual and eternal death—separation from life and blessing. The parallel phrase "her paths unto the dead" (rephaim, רְפָאִים) uses a term for departed spirits dwelling in Sheol, the realm of the dead (Psalm 88:10; Isaiah 14:9). The imagery is stark: adultery's path doesn't lead to pleasure and freedom but to the grave and hell.

This warning transcends mere physical adultery, symbolizing all enticements away from wisdom (identified with God's word and fear of the LORD). Sexual sin particularly embodies rebellion against God's design, but Proverbs' "strange woman" also represents folly, worldliness, and idolatry—anything competing with devotion to God. The New Testament echoes this, portraying sin's deceptive promises leading to death (Romans 6:23; James 1:14-15). Christ offers the opposite path: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Wisdom's path leads to life (3:18); folly's path to death. The choice determines eternal destiny.

## Historical Context

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Proverbs 2 belongs to Solomon's extended instruction to his son (chapters 1-9), composed circa 950 BC during Israel's golden age. This section provides foundational wisdom before the shorter, discrete proverbs of chapters 10-31. The literary structure presents wisdom and folly as competing women calling to naïve youth—wisdom offers life, folly offers death disguised as pleasure.

Ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature addressed similar themes, but Israel's wisdom was distinctly covenantal, grounded in "fear of the LORD" (1:7). While Egyptian and Mesopotamian texts warned against adultery for pragmatic reasons (disease, social disgrace, economic loss), Proverbs roots its warning in God's creational design and covenant law (Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 20:10). Sexual purity wasn't merely social convention but covenant faithfulness to Yahweh.

Solomon's own life tragically illustrated Proverbs' warnings. Despite his wisdom, he allowed foreign wives to turn his heart to idolatry (1 Kings 11:1-8), proving that even the wisest can fall to seduction's allure. Post-exilic Israel returned to Proverbs, finding its warnings validated by the nation's history of spiritual adultery with foreign gods leading to exile—the ultimate "death" of national existence. The early church applied these warnings to spiritual adultery: loving the world over Christ (James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17).

## Related Passages

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**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

## Study Questions

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1. How do modern culture's promises of sexual freedom and fulfillment mirror the seductress's deceptive invitation in Proverbs?
2. What practical safeguards can protect believers from the "paths unto the dead" that our culture normalizes?

3. How does understanding sexual sin as spiritual adultery against God intensify its seriousness beyond merely breaking rules?
4. In what ways does Christ provide both warning against death's path and the way to abundant life?
5. How can parents and church leaders effectively communicate wisdom's life-giving path to a generation bombarded with folly's appeals?

## Interlinear Text

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כִּי־שְׁחָה־אֶל־מִיתָּה  
 H3588 **inclineth** H413 **unto death** H4194 **For her house** H1004  
 H7743 H4570 H4570

בַּיִת־הָאֶלְּמָנָה־עַל־מֵתִים  
 H413 **unto the dead** H7496

מַעֲלָתָיו:

**and her paths**

## Additional Cross-References

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**Proverbs 9:18** (Parallel theme): But he knoweth not that the dead are there; and that her guests are in the depths of hell.

**Revelation 21:8** (Parallel theme): But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

**Ephesians 5:5** (Parallel theme): For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.