

Proverbs 23:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For a whore is a deep ditch; and a strange woman is a narrow pit.

Analysis

This verse employs stark imagery to warn against sexual immorality. 'A whore is a deep ditch' (אִשָּׁה זֹנָה עֲמֻקָּה זֶנְחָה/ki-shuchah amuqqah zonah, for a deep pit is a prostitute) and 'a strange woman is a narrow pit' (אִשָּׁה זָרָה צָרָה וּבְאֵר/uv'er tzarah nokhriyyah, a narrow well is an adulteress) depict sexual sin as a trap from which escape is nearly impossible. The 'deep ditch' suggests falling in is easy but climbing out extraordinarily difficult. The 'narrow pit' intensifies this—confined space makes escape even more hopeless. This echoes 22:14 and reflects Proverbs' consistent warnings against sexual immorality (2:16-19; 5:3-23; 6:24-35; 7:6-27; 23:28). Sexual sin uniquely enslaves (1 Corinthians 6:18). It destroys marriages, families, reputations, health, and spiritual vitality. Yet Christ offers hope—He welcomed and transformed sexual sinners (Luke 7:36-50; John 4:1-42; 8:1-11). The gospel promises: 'such were some of you: but ye are washed' (1 Corinthians 6:11).

Historical Context

Sexual immorality pervaded ancient Near Eastern cultures. Canaanite religion practiced ritual prostitution (Deuteronomy 23:17). Surrounding nations lacked Israel's sexual ethics. The law commanded death for adultery (Leviticus 20:10), underscoring its gravity. Despite this, Israel repeatedly fell into sexual sin—often linked to idolatry (Numbers 25:1-3; 1 Kings 11:1-8). Prophets used marriage imagery for God's covenant with Israel, portraying idolatry as adultery (Hosea 1-3; Jeremiah 3:1-10; Ezekiel 16). In Greco-Roman culture, sexual immorality was normative. Prostitution, homosexuality, and adultery were culturally accepted.

Christians' sexual purity was countercultural and attracted criticism. Paul's letters repeatedly address sexual ethics (1 Corinthians 5-7; Ephesians 5:3-12; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8), calling believers to holiness. The early church maintained strict sexual standards as witness to transformed lives.

Related Passages

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. What 'guardrails' protect you from sexual temptation in a pornographic culture?
2. If you've fallen into sexual sin, do you understand that Christ offers complete forgiveness and transformation?
3. How can you pursue or maintain sexual purity as witness to the gospel's transforming power?

Interlinear Text

פִּי	שׁוֹחַ	הַ	עֲמֻקָּה	הַ	זֶוֶן	וּבְאֵר	רָ	צָרָה	נָכְרָה:
H3588	ditch		is a deep		For a whore	pit		woman is a narrow	and a strange
	H7745		H6013		H2181	H875		H6862	H5237

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 22:14 (Parallel theme): The mouth of strange women is a deep pit: he that is abhorred of the LORD shall fall therein.