

Proverbs 30:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness.

Analysis

Such is the way of an adulterous woman; she eateth, and wipeth her mouth, and saith, I have done no wickedness. This verse applies the previous metaphor negatively: the ishah me'na'afet (אִשָּׁה מְנַאֲפֵת, adulterous woman) operates with the same traceless, mysterious manner but toward evil ends. Like the eagle, serpent, ship, and courtship that leave no trail, adultery conceals its tracks. "She eateth" uses sexual euphemism (Proverbs 9:17). "Wipeth her mouth" (machatah piha, מְחַטֵּת פִּיהָ) suggests removing evidence. "I have done no wickedness" (lo fa'alti aven, לֹא-פָעַלְתִּי אָוֶן) is brazen denial.

The horror is not merely committing adultery but the hardened conscience that rationalizes sin as innocence. She treats sacred covenant violation as casually as eating a meal—satisfy desire, clean up, move on. No remorse, no conviction, no awareness of having violated God's law or betrayed marriage vows. This describes the seared conscience (1 Timothy 4:2), the person so practiced in sin that guilt no longer registers. Jesus warned that persistent sin darkens the heart until "the light that is in thee be darkness" (Matthew 6:23).

Historical Context

Proverbs repeatedly warns against adultery (2:16-19, 5:3-23, 6:24-35, 7:6-27). In ancient Israel, adultery was capital crime (Leviticus 20:10, Deuteronomy 22:22). The severity reflected adultery's assault on family structure—the foundational social unit. Adultery violated covenant, betrayed trust, confused genealogy, and

corrupted household order. The adulteress here is not the naïve young woman seduced by smooth words but the hardened predator who initiates seduction without conscience. Proverbs personifies wisdom and folly as women (Lady Wisdom vs. Folly); the adulteress represents those who pursue sin systematically while maintaining respectable appearance.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What sins might you be treating casually like the adulteress—committing, rationalizing, denying—while claiming innocence?
2. How does repeated sin progressively desensitize conscience until we no longer recognize wickedness, and what spiritual disciplines restore moral sensitivity?
3. How does Jesus's confrontation of the woman at the well (John 4) and the woman caught in adultery (John 8) offer both truth-telling and grace that expose sin while offering restoration?

Interlinear Text

וְכֹלְתָה אֲכַלְתָה מְנֻאָפָת אֲשֶׁר הָרְגָתָה
H3651 Such is the way H1870 woman H802 of an adulterous H5003 she eateth H398 and wipeth H4229

פִּתְחָה לֹא אָמַנְתָה פָּעַלְתִּי אָמַנְתָה
H6310 her mouth H559 and saith H3808 I have done H6466 no wickedness H205

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 5:6 (Parallel theme): Lest thou shouldest ponder the path of life, her ways are moveable, that thou canst not know them.

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