

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 נֹאֲפֶטֶת, 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*, מַחֲטָה פִּיהָ) suggests removing evidence. "I have done no wickedness" (*lo fa'alti aven*, לֹא־אֲפַלְטֵי 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

Psalms 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

כִּי הִנֵּה	כִּי הִנֵּה	אִשָּׁה	מִן אֵת	אֵת כָּלָה	וְהִתְהַוָּתָהּ
H3651	Such is the way	woman	of an adulterous	she eateth	and wipeth
	H1870	H802	H5003	H398	H4229
פִּי יָהּ	אָמַרְתִּי	לֹא	פָעַלְתִּי	אֵין:	
her mouth	and saith	H3808	I have done	no wickedness	
H6310	H559		H6466	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.

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org