

An Avoidable Tragedy

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[0 : 0 0] And I do, before I begin, bring my greetings from, really on behalf of the three churches in Sovereign Grace,! and your sister churches in Maryland, as well as in central Pennsylvania.

I bring greetings on behalf of those pastors and behalf of the people of those churches. And if every member of this team could stand up and represent as well, they would.

To say, what a joy it is to partner with you, to join arms and to share the gospel of Jesus with children. Suffer the little ones to come unto me, said Christ.

And that's what we're here for. This week will be a week of allowing the children whom the Lord brings through these doors to hear about Jesus Christ, to hear about what he's done for them.

And that they would hear about the true gospel that saves and that transforms your lives inside out. So I bring greetings on behalf of those churches. In particular, I bring greetings from Peter Privetera, the senior pastor and the pastoral team at Crossway Church, and really the people of Crossway.

[0 : 5 9] We love you. We appreciate you so much. And we look forward to these opportunities to link arms and to serve together. So thank you for having me and for the team, for having us together.

We feel that we're at home. All right. We're there in God's Word. Chapter 7 of the book of Proverbs. This morning, I bring to you a sobering message. I don't mean it to be this way.

Certainly, God's Word has moments in it that are so uplifting and encouraging. Certainly, we can think of many of those passages. Isaiah chapter 40, how he causes those who are weak or faint to mount up on wings like eagles, right?

Or we think of moments in Scripture, Romans 8, that tells us, reminds us, that God makes all things work together for the good. And the joy of the Lord is our strength. And all those passages that bring about happy thoughts.

Well, God's Word also brings to us warnings and sober moments. Much as you would visit a crash scene. Have you ever driven past an accident on the road?

[1 : 5 9] And you wonder, how did this happen? The ambulances there, the police officers, the wreckage. And you wonder, did the people survive? What happened there?

How did this come to be? Well, this is what we're going to encounter here in Proverbs chapter 7. And we're going to drive slowly past a crash scene. And it's a very sobering moment indeed in Scripture.

And we must come to these moments in Scripture. We have to. God places them before us for good purpose, for warning, for encouragement, and certainly to bring our eyes to look upward to our Savior, who rescues us from the deepest of pits, who brings us to salvation even through sobering things.

And I'm going to ask for the Lord's help. And then we're going to read this passage, the whole chapter. So, let's pray. Our Father in Heaven, we thank You.

We thank You for Your grace and mercy that come to us in deep need. Most importantly, in our greatest need for salvation, forgiveness of the many sins that if any one of us were to stand to begin to recount the ways that we've sinned, we would run out of time to hear all the confession of sin.

[3 : 18] And that's only the ones we know. Lord, You have seen our hearts. You have known our sin. And yet, You have forgiven us richly, freely, fully in Jesus Christ.

His blood cleanses us from all unrighteousness. And Lord, that's our hope this morning as we go to Your Word and to this sobering message in Proverbs 7. Lord, we come with faith knowing that we have a Savior who is Jesus the Lord, whose blood has cleansed us and who rescues us.

He rescues us from our sins and from our temptations. We ask Your blessing now as we go to Your Word. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Proverbs chapter 7.

And the title of my message is An Avoidable Tragedy. Because this is what chapter 7 is going to chronicle for us. It may be a slow passing by a wreckage on the side of a road, but it's going to show us a tragedy that can be averted.

An avoidable tragedy. So let's turn our attention to God's words. Proverbs 7, starting verse 1. My son, keep my words. Treasure up my commandments with you.

[4 : 28] Keep my commandments and live. Keep my teaching as the apple of your eye. Bind them on your fingers. Write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, you are my sister.

And call insight your intimate friend. To keep you from the forbidden woman. From the adulteress with her smooth words. For the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice.

And I have seen among the simple. I have perceived among the youths a young man lacking sense. Passing along the street near her corner.

Taking the road to her house in the twilight and the evening. At the time of night darkness. And behold, the woman meets him. Dressed as a prostitute.

Wily of heart. She is loud and wayward. Her feet do not stay at home. Now in the street. Now in the market. And at every corner she lies in wait.

[5 : 28] She seizes him and kisses him. And with bold face she says to him. I had to offer sacrifices. Today I have paid my vows.

So now I have come out to meet you. To seek you eagerly. And I have found you. I have spread my couch with coverings.

Colored linens from Egyptian linen. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love till morning. Let us delight ourselves with love.

For my husband is not at home. He is gone on a long journey. He took a bag of money with him. At full moon he will come home. With much seductive speech she persuades him.

With her smooth talk she compels him. All at once he follows her. As an ox goes to the slaughter. Or as a stag is caught fast.

[6 : 26] Till an arrow pierces its liver. As a bird rushes into a snare. He does not know that it will cost him his life. And now, oh sons, listen to me.

And be attentive to the words of my mouth. Let not your heart turn aside to her ways. Do not stray into her paths. For many a victim she has laid low.

And all her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is the way to Sheol. Going down to the chambers of death. We have read really a story.

An avoidable tragedy. And it really is avoidable. And I believe that is the hope of the gospel we have this morning. When we talk about sin and temptation.

And what the writer of the book of Proverbs here in chapter 7 is trying to get across. To our ears and to our hearts. We are going to hear the sobering tale of temptation. How temptation works.

[7 : 25] How sin is allured by it. And taken in. And brought to death. Through it. We are going to also hear the hope of the gospel. And I trust that you will be encouraged.

As you hear of the deliverance of Jesus. That comes to those who are humble. For the theme of this passage is. The tragedy of temptation shall be averted by the grace of God.

As we humbly respond in faith. Let me say that again. The tragedy of temptation shall be averted by the grace of God. As we humbly respond in faith.

And there are five points. No less. And no more. I promise. Then five points. Wisdom's appeal. Temptation initiated. Temptations offered.

Temptation accomplished. And temptation averted. So let's dive right in. Wisdom's appeal. We read in verses 1 through 5. Look with me there.

[8 : 25] You read of this. It's a father talking to his son. An elder talking to someone who is younger. Who may not know any better. Who needs to be shown the ropes. Needs to be explained.

This is the way you are to walk. In safety and truth and righteousness. So we have an older person speaking with a younger. And he's appealing. He's addressing his beloved child on a very important topic.

And before he goes into his topic. Before he addresses his child. His son. About this issue of temptation. Of being allured by sin. He wants to gain the child's attention.

He has to appeal. He has to make it clear. This is an important thing we are about to talk about. He has to prime the pump. Before truth can flow. We have to receive primer.

Like a primer coat. Before the paint of truth can stick to our souls. We need to understand how precious and how beautiful. How sweet is God's word. How proper and righteous and true his words are all together.

[9 : 27] Before we take the time to sit down and listen. And that's what the father is doing here in these verses. He's going to appeal to us. This is what wisdom is. This is why it is important.

And without those appeals. Without understanding. Think about this. If we don't understand how precious and true God's words are. It's almost like talking to an 11 year old about the virtues of marriage.

You ever talk to an 11 year old boy about marriage and getting married to a woman? At least my 11 year olds in my circles. They want nothing to do with girls. They're yucky. Right?

There are some young boys in here. They're disgusting. You don't want to be around girls when you're 11 years old. You want to be with the boys playing with toys. So the talk about the virtues of marriage with an 11 year old child.

It's going to fall on deaf ears. They're not going to get it. You could tell them wax eloquent about the blessing of marriage. But until they really understand and see the preciousness. The value of it.

[10 : 23] They're not going to listen. It's going to go one ear out the other. And that's certainly what this father is doing. He's priming the pump. Because wisdom. The wisdom of this chapter in Proverbs.

And warning us against temptation and sin. The wisdom that is in this passage. It means the difference between life and death. It means the difference between true joy and everlasting misery.

So it's very important that every one of us. Not sit here like an 11 year old boy. But rather sit here. Primed and ready. To receive God's word.

To hear it. And to treasure it. So therefore the father appeals in many different ways. In these verses 1 through 5. He says to keep wisdom like you would hold a treasure. How would you hold a treasure?

How would you hold something that is precious to you? How would you hold it? Loosely? Would you put it on the counter? For anybody to look at it and even snatch away?

[11 : 24] No. You would hold it and pull it in close. You would cherish it. You would not let anything or anyone get near to it. It would be kept safe. And that's certainly what God is calling us to treat his words.

We must keep God's words safe in our hearts. Not that the word is in danger. But that we are in danger of not receiving those words. So God calls us to treat wisdom like we would hold treasure.

He also says to bind wisdom on your fingers. To tie it like strings on your fingers. So you never lose sight. How often do we look at our hands? I never measured how often I look at my hand.

But I can tell you. If you had something tied on your fingers. You would always see it. And you would never forget it. And that's how God is calling. Appealing to us. To treat wisdom that way.

So it's always in front of you. You cannot get away from it. You're always going to see this is important. This is what I need right now. It's in front of me. So the father appeals to his son to bind wisdom.

[12 : 22] He also says to write wisdom on the tablet of your heart. Verse 3. Write them. Write these words. These teachings. These truths of God. Write them on the tablet of your heart.

In other words. Write it in such a place that it cannot be lost. It's indelible. It's been carved into rock. In the core central part of your very being.

And nothing can take from there. That's a safe that can be locked. And left to be. So write it there. Where it will be kept safe. And he then goes on and says.

Call wisdom. You are my sister. Verse 4. You are my sister. And call insight. Your intimate friend. In other words. We are to treat wisdom. God's words.

As the most intimate friend possible. The one we should spend time with. The one who will lead us only right places. The company we should be keeping. Keep it close by.

[13 : 19] And finally. To keep wisdom. Verse 4. I'm sorry. Verse 2. To keep wisdom as a teaching. The teaching as the apple of our eye.

In other words. Keep the pupil of your eye. You ever poke your eye? What is the immediate response. When you poke your eye? You will forget about everything else. Trust me. You will just. Oh.

It's that moment where. You could be holding a glass vase. And if someone pokes in your eye. You don't care about the glass vase. It's shattering. You're covering your eye. You're tending to your eye. It's the thing of walking.

Can you imagine walking through a thorny bush. Walking through this brush. And what is our instinct in those moments? It's to guard our eyes. As we're pushing the branches aside. We want to protect the pupils of our eyes.

The apple of our eye. And that's what God's word is to be for us. We are to protect it. Keep it. Like we would keep the very pupil. The most sensitive part of our face. That we would keep it.

- [14 : 15] Protect it. And that's what God's words. And what these truths are to be for us. So wisdom. So says the father. It's like a treasure. That's more valuable. And more vital. In our lives. Than anything else. The wisdom from God. From his word. Is more valuable. And more vital to life. Than anything else.
- Therefore. Hold it tight. Protect it. Treasure it. Write it on your fingers. Put it everywhere. So that it's always there. And you never put it aside.
- This is to be dealt with like treasure. Treasure. So. What is God's word to us this morning? This is my charge to you in this first concern. This first question. Are you treasuring the Bible?
- Because that's the measure of whether you're covering your eyes. Guarding the apple of your eye. That's the measure to whether you're treasuring God's word. Is are you treasuring the scriptures?
- [15 : 17] Is the scriptures relocated to an end table? Or a side table in your life? Or is it at the banqueting feast table? Is it at your dining room table? On your kitchen counter?
- Or wherever you eat? Where do you keep the Bible in your life? May God help us. If the scriptures for you are left to a corner. To a side table.
- The side of the room in a shadow. Maybe covered over with dust. May God cause your heart to repent. That you are not treasuring his word.
- His word is to be a feast. It's to be a food. Day by day. It is to be as central as the very lunches and meals we eat day after day.
- It is to be that to us. Man shall not live by bread alone. But by every word that comes from the mouth of God. So may God cause us to have feast in his word.
- [16 : 10] So how are you treating God's word? Because that reveals. Are you primed and ready? To receive wisdom from God. If you treasure his word.
- If you read the scriptures day by day. Feasting upon it. Then you are ready to receive the wisdom that the father is about to appeal. And one side note here. Fathers.
- I want to speak to you for a moment. Are you leading your sons and your daughters to scripture? Brothers. You must bring your families to the Bible. You must.
- Who else shall? Who else has been given that responsibility in the families of God? You must bring your wife and your children to the scripture.
- Bring them. And let them be taught as well to treasure God's word. So moving on. Wisdom's appeal. Verses 1-5. Now to temptation. Initiated. Verses 6-9.
- [17 : 07] We hear. Here's the beginning of the story of tragedy. The tragic story of temptation. It begins with a young man who's lacking sense.
- We see here in verse 6. For at the window of my house. This is the father speaking. Remember? The father's addressing his son. He appealed to his son's heart to listen. Prime your heart. Get ready.
- Here's the story. And now he's sharing the story. And the father had observed something. Again, he drove past the wreckage. This tragic wreckage.
- And now he's recounting to his son. He's reviewing the tape. He's rewinding and reviewing what happened here. And he's going to share what he's learned. At the window of my house, I have looked out through my lattice.
- And I have seen among the simple. I have perceived among the youths a young man lacking sense. So the father sees this young man. And it's not clear whether this young man was willfully entering the forbidden woman's corner.

[18 : 05] The territory of temptation. Or at best maybe this man was just ignorant completely. Or at worst he was on hopeful hunt for sinful contact. Either way, we're dealing with a man who's very foolish.

Very foolish to be wandering in places and playing with temptation. Playing with sin. And there's two things we can quickly learn from this temptation being initiated.

Verses 6 through 9. We're not limited to two. But for the sake of time, let's look at two things. Number one, temptations are concrete things. Okay? This may seem very simple, but it's important to get this.

There are places. There are times. There are things. And there are actual people with names and addresses that are associated with your unique temptations to sin.

There are places. Things. People. There are times in the day when you're at certain locations that are to be associated with our temptations. It might seem simplistic, but it's important that we not overlook this fact that temptation is dealing with concrete things because it's easy as Christians to begin to skip around the world like children, school children at recess.

[19 : 21] To wander around the world without a care. Not really thinking, but being very ignorant of the temptations that are around us. And in a sense, we end up becoming like this simple foolish man who ends up being on the very corner where the forbidden woman lives.

And he ends up wandering further and deeper into sin and into slavery and then to death. Well, temptations are very concrete things. For the Christians, we are disciples of Jesus.

We walk in an embattled path. This is not a recessed playground we live in. We live in a place with places, times, things, and people that are tempting to us.

They are tempting to us. They tempt us to sin. And if we're going to protect our Julian Jesus Christ, we're going to guard God's truth and wisdom in our hearts, writing indelibly on our heart, the tablet of our heart, we must deal with this world very soberly.

Do we hear our Savior's voice? He wants us to walk wisely in regard to our temptations. Walk wisely in regard to the world around us. So, at times, Jesus will speak to you.

[20 : 32] He will tell you to cut off certain things. Concrete things. People. Things. Particular things that you do. You love to do. The Lord Jesus Christ calls us, at times, when it has to do with temptation, to cut it off.

To pluck out your eye if necessary. Remember that? Jesus tells us, if your eye causes you to sin, what should you do? Plop it out.

What if your hand causes you to sin? What does He say to do? Cut it off. Now, if we were to deal with that, literally, all of us would have neither hands nor eyes.

But our Savior means to teach in that, that we must deal with sin, we must deal with it. We must walk in the way of righteousness around it, avoid it, do whatever it takes to deal with it in the way that God would be honored and glorified, that we would be protected.

So, let's be inspired by any testimony we hear of somebody who purposely cuts off something that tempts them. Be inspired to do that yourself. What tempts you, brother?

[21 : 37] Sister, what is tempting to you? That you are allowing to be in your life. That you are allowing to be a place that you go to. That you are allowing to be a person that you associate with.

That you are allowing to be something that you handle, that you touch. What is it? The Lord Jesus would call you to repent. To put it aside. To follow Him.

To follow His joyful ways. So that's the first thing we can learn about temptation being initiated. They are concrete things. Secondly, there is profound need for light.

In verse 9, in the twilight, in the evening, at the time of night and darkness, that was the time of this young man's deception and his fall into temptation.

It was in the time of darkness. The time when twilight, when you can kind of see, but not really. It's a nondescript time. And that's where sin thrives, doesn't it? Sin and temptation thrives where it is dark.

[22 : 37] Where it is hidden. And it doesn't mean literally darkness. Sin thrives where we are keeping it in the dark, hidden from other people. Where we're not walking in the light. Jesus commands us to walk in the light.

The book of 1 John, chapter 1. This is the message we have heard from Jesus and proclaim to you. That God is light. And in Him is no darkness at all.

If we say we have fellowship with Christ while we walk in the darkness, we speak lies and do not practice the truth.

But, if we walk in the light as Jesus is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus' Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.

And the truth is not in us. However, if we confess our sin, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and is just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

[23 : 44] The Lord Jesus has given us a prescription of walking in the light. It is fellowship with one another. And it's me confessing my sins to you. I'm confessing. I need to be confessing my sin.

I need to be confessing the areas I'm tempted with the appropriate people so that they can help me. And if I remain alone, I am remaining hidden. I am remaining in the darkness and shadows.

And that's where sin and temptation thrive. So, let us walk in the light and walk in confession. There is glorious freedom, I'll tell you this, for any here who are in darkness.

There is glorious, joyful, joyful freedom on the other side of confession. You may fear confessing your sin this morning. You may fear going to another brother or sister, an appropriate leader in the church and saying, this is where I'm stuck.

Help me, please. Help me get out of this. This is going to lead to death. You may be afraid of sharing that, confessing that, but let me tell you this, there is joy and there is peace and there is treasure on the other side of confession.

[24 : 50] Go, confess your sins and be set free. There's no other way around this. No one, we can't do this alone. We can't deal with our sins and our temptations alone.

We have to deal honestly and openly with our sins and temptations. So, when's the last time you confessed a sin? When's the last time you went to a brother or a sister and said, I need help here.

I'm falling again and again. I've tried it on my own. I can't do this. I'm stuck. When's the last time you asked for help? Well, if it's been a long time, it may be that you are living in shadows, sister.

It may be that you're dwelling in darkness, brother. That you're not walking in the light as He is in the light and as He would cleanse us and help us as we seek out fellowship.

So, let's us do that. Moving on to our third point, temptations offer. Verses 10-21, we looked at how temptation is realized. It comes to us.

[25 : 49] It's initiated. The forbidden woman who represents temptation in this passage. Now, we have to be clear here. Though sexual desire and covetousness are in view in Proverbs 7, let's be clear.

All sin is in view. All sin and temptation. We're not just looking at sexual sin here in this passage. All sin and desire, whether it's pride or materialism, desiring things, coveting other people's stuff or anger and jealousy, gossip or slander or whatever it may be.

Or even just living in a dull, unthinking way. Just living content where you are. Lazy about your spiritual life. All those, there's your forms of temptations that are in those sins and walking in those kind of ways.

All our temptations have a similar and a very predictable story as what we're seeing here in Proverbs 7. So, I just want to be clear on that. So the power of the temptations allure in Proverbs 7 according to this chapter, it's not so much in how the woman looked.

And if you look here in this passage, you'll see that what's really in effect here is the woman's speech. It's what she's saying. It's what temptation says to you.

[27 : 03] That's the hook. Right? When temptation hooks us, it's because of this. It's making a promise of itself. It's promising you reward, riches, wealth, blessing, beauty, joy, beyond your wildest dreams.

And in the moment that it hooks you, it hooked you because you're listening. You're listening to words. It's speaking. It's not so much on how the thing looks, although that certainly can be alluring as well, how something looks.

It glitters. It's glamorous. It's beautiful to our sight. However, what really gets us is the promises that that thing makes to us. It promises you joy.

It promises you pleasure. It promises you anything and everything you want to hear. It'll tell you everything you want to hear. You name it, it'll say it to get you to come in.

It's about the allure of temptation. It's a seductive speech. Verse 21. Her smooth talk in the second half of verse 21. It's that speech, that smooth talk that the temptation draws in.

[28 : 05] It's the deceit of diplomacy. It's the deceit of diplomacy and false promises. There lies the power and the trickery of temptation.

It's diplomacy at its worst. It is false promises at their best. It's getting us to come in the door by speaking anything we believe.

And there's much we could comment on this about the specifics of this woman's presentation, how she draws the young, foolish simpleton in. How she brings this man in, there's much we could speak about, but I'll limit it to two things.

Here we go. Number one, temptation is personal and it's personalized. Temptation comes in, it'll write your name. It'll write your name on the line.

All of a sudden, it's like you're hearing your name. You ever been in a room and you hear someone speak your name and it's not you they're calling for? It's like you're naturally drawn to oh, what's going on? What do you want?

[29 : 06] You know, I don't know if you have one of those names that sounds like other names, but if that's your case, you know what I'm talking about. When you hear your name, you're automatically drawn to listen. You're already cued in. What's going on here?

Well, that's what temptation is going to do. It's going to speak your name loud and clear. It's going to even use your middle name. So it's very clear. This is for you. This.

Oh, Douglas Allen Plank. This could be yours. Three easy installments of 1995. It's going to speak your name and it's going to it's going to cater its presentation about you.

It's going to know everything about you, what you like, what colors you like to wear. It's going to know everything, the food you like to eat. Oh, it's going to know everything about your desires, how you think.

It knows everything about how you would best respond under certain circumstances. If you're tired and cranky or you're happy and go lucky, wherever you may be, temptation knows your number.

[30 : 09] The devil knows your area code, your number. He knows it. And he's going to dial it up every single time.

He's not going to do some general call of temptation. To everyone who would be interested in this, aisle four is offering. No! It's going to speak your name.

And it's going to get your specific information right. He knows. And our flesh is ready to listen. So it's personalized.

Check verse 15 now. This is what the woman says. I mean, listen to the pronouns here. Verse 15. So now I, I have come to meet you.

To seek you eagerly. And I have found you. I mean, this woman is feigning over this young simpleton and saying, I looked for you.

[31 : 11] I found you. Here you are. I mean, we know the truth about sin and temptation and the devil's work. He could care less who it is. He just wants to destroy.

He wants to divide people from Jesus Christ and throw them in the garbage. He wants to separate people from their Savior. And he's going to call their name. He's going to say, I found you.

I was looking for you. Here you are. Let's do this. Whatever this is that divides your heart from Christ. So it's personal and it's personalized.

And secondly, temptation is personal and personalized. Secondly, temptation also blitzes the senses while muffling the conscience. It will blitz your senses. It really is like an infomercial that's got all these pictures and words and everything going at the same time.

It's blitzing you. It is blitzing you from every angle so that you can be wowed and drawn in to believe the lie and to take and to eat and to be killed.

[32 : 15] So it blitzes the senses. And we can go into details here of how the woman seizes this young man in verse 13. Kisses him with a bold face. She says these promises to him and it eases his conscience that her husband is far, far away.

He brought a bag of money. He has to spend it all before he can come home. So naturally, he won't be home until the next full moon. So that's a while off. We have plenty of time to do the deed. She makes many promises and blitzes his senses and eases his conscience and muffles it.

so that the temptation can be received. And that's precisely what happens. And I have to speak to this. We must be convinced. We must be convinced that our greatest happiness in this world, not just the world to come, your greatest happiness in this world lies not in the treasures that your sin and your temptations offer you.

Your greatest joy is found in walking in holiness in Jesus Christ. Holiness in Christ is the believer's greatest joy. And that's exactly what the devil wants to war against.

The devil wants us to believe that to be holy is like going for a root canal. It's the most boring, worst waste of time that we're just going to fall again.

[33 : 38] It's not worth your time. It's dumb. It's dull. The world wants you to believe that that's not fun. That has no joy associated with it. But this is not the truth.

Jesus Christ walking in His ways, knowing Him fully and truly, abiding in His love, bearing fruit for Him, living a holy and pure life before Him.

There lies joy. There lies treasure in this world. Do you believe that? That in Jesus Christ is your treasure. And in living for Him is treasure experienced.

There it is. That's the secret to a godly life, brother. The secret to a godly life, sister, is that you would know and be convinced that Jesus Christ is all pleasure, all joy, all treasure.

Believe it. And bank on it. And begin to walk out in holiness. So let us do that. How are we being tempted today? What are the lies that we're believing what are the specific street corners that we're being tempted by?

[34 : 44] Well, let's stop taking that route. Let's stop the nonsense and stop going the same way as we always go. Let's stop visiting the websites that we always are tempted by.

Let's knock it off. By the grace and power of God, we will do so. And we'll take up Jesus and live purely. Finally, verse 22-23, temptation accomplished.

This is the end of the story. And I have one more point after this and that will be quick. So temptation accomplished. Verses 22-23, this is where the father slows the car down.

He is on the highway. The burning wreck is on the side of the road. His child's in the back seat. And he's slowing the car down purposefully.

He wants his child to see this. I remember as a child in school, this was a ploy that many school districts back in the United States and the Northeast used to, probably still do, is they would take for warning against drunk driving, warning against the dangers of drunk driving, they would take a car wreck from an actual fatality, a crash.

[35 : 57] They would take that car and plop it on the front yard of a particular school. It was pretty morbid. It was very morbid. You know, to see this metal heap that is totally, you couldn't tell it was a car.

That somehow human blood and remains were in that car that perished in the wreck and all the result of drinking and driving and there was a sign just very simple in front of that car that said, don't drink and drive.

It left quite a mark. Very morbid. And that's precisely, again, what the writer of Proverbs 7 is doing. He has planted a sign. It's very simple.

Don't mess with temptation. And here in these final verses, verses 22 through the first half, I'm sorry, through verse 23, we're reading of really three very distinct pictures.

Violent pictures that ought to make our stomach turn to think about. Verse 22, all at once this young man follows her as an ox goes to the slaughter.

[37 : 03] What happens in the slaughter? We don't want to know. I don't want to be there when the ox, a very large animal, is slaughtered. But that's what the father's doing.

He's rolling down the window so the son can take it all in. Look, son. Look at the ox getting slaughtered. And he goes further. Or a stag or a deer is caught fast until an arrow pierces its liver.

The father slows down the car. The window's rolling down. Look, son. There's a deer caught in a trap. Watch the hunter kill it. He's going to shoot it right in the liver.

Isn't that neat? And finally, this third picture of a violent sword is verse 23, the second half. Or, as a bird rushes into a snare, he does not know that that snare will cost him his life.

Stupid bird. You don't go in a snare. Why would you do that? You're going to die now. And that's what temptation is. This father has slowed the car down.

[38 : 11] Now, brothers and sisters, are we aware that giving into temptation places us in the same company as an ox? As a deer?

Or as a bird in a snare? Are we aware that that is what the writer of Proverbs is telling us? God is speaking to us about our sins and our temptations. If we live playfully or ignorantly with our sin, we are joining the company of an oxen leading to slaughter.

Or a bird playing with a snare. Or a deer playing around a hunter. We're playing with our own souls. These unwitting animals are led to violent death.

And the writer here, God himself, is saying, if we play with forbidden things, if we look at forbidden things, if we taste, touch, or even think and daydream about forbidden things, we are joining the same stories as these three animals.

Because no matter what, how we hide or make excuses, if we play with temptation, it will always lead to death. We have to understand that. That's part of the deal here.

[39 : 29] If we sign the bottom line and agree to the terms of our temptations, we believe the lies, the glittery promises that this will make you happy beyond belief. If you believe that, then you're also signing up for your own death.

Because that is where sin leads us. The book of James tells us that when temptation gives birth to sin and sin then leads to death.

And the book of Romans tells us the wages of sin is death. We have to understand if we agree to the terms of temptation, we are agreeing to die.

We're agreeing to give our lives over to certain death if we fail to receive the grace that our Lord gives as we repent. May God give us the grace to repent.

And we cannot say, surely this won't happen to me. I might be a bird in a snare. I might be an ox to the slaughter. But now, this is the one time they won't slaughter the ox.

[40 : 27] This will be the one time that the butcher doesn't raise a knife. I'm just going to stand there. I'll moo whatever an ox does at that moment. And I'll be fine.

Or maybe my skin will somehow be thicker than the several million oxen before me. And the knife will just bounce off. Or I'll be like the bird that thinks I can play with the snare.

It's just not going to trigger like all the other snares do with all my other bird friends who died. This one, no, no, I've got light feet like Cassius Clay.

I can dance like a butterfly, sting like a bee. I'm not going to set this snare off. No, it's going to go off. It's an unchangeable fact of sin and temptation.

If you play in the snare, it's going to get you. If you play in the butcher shop as an oxen, you're going to lose your head. That's a given fact. So we cannot say, this surely won't happen to me.

[41 : 24] I can do what I'm doing, avoid the tragedy. I can avert tragedy. I am the grand exception to the rule of sin and temptation. Brothers and sisters, you cannot say that.

You cannot mix fuel, air and flame without it resulting in an explosion. It will always blow up and it will kill. So tragedy here in this passage is a result of false promises being believed and warnings being ignored.

So I have to preach the gospel here. I have to preach the gospel and concluding here temptation averted in verses 24 through 27. The gospel, the gospel, brothers and sisters, comes to sinners who need Jesus.

The gospel comes, the good news that we have a Savior who delivers us from our temptations, delivers us from the evil one, who leads us out of temptation, leads us to truth.

We need a Savior. And this is this last point, temptation averted. And the Father concludes in verse 24, And now, O sons, listen to me.

[42 : 34] Listen to me and be attentive to the words of my mouth. He has called for a response. The Father, in verse 24, has called for a response of His Son.

God is calling for you to respond this morning to His Word. As it refers to sin and temptation, God is calling you to repent. He is calling you to exercise faith to say, Jesus will bring me greater joy, will be greater treasure than all the treasures of this world combined, that I will run for Jesus.

You can have this world, but give me Jesus. You can have all the world, but give me Jesus. Here's the hope. Though there is a tragedy in this chapter that took place and the crashes on the side of the road, we have just driven past it slowly.

Our Father rolled down the windows so that we would feel the heat of it, so that we would see the carnage of it, so we would see the whole thing. And He has helped us understand how this wreckage happened.

He told us, line for line, He reviewed the tapes with us, play by play. We now understand how that young man wrecked his car and is a dead man. We understand it now.

[43 : 50] But for the Christian, there is great hope beyond just hearing how we should avoid sin. Here is the hope, the wisdom that is offered to us in the book of Proverbs has come to us in the form of Jesus the Lord.

Jesus is for us wisdom and righteousness from God. We have wisdom in Jesus Christ. The ability to walk wise and pure lives is not in your power.

I'll tell you that again. You cannot live a pure and holy life or a wise and a pure life before God in your strength. You know that. I know that.

We've tried it, haven't we? Haven't you tried and haven't you failed? Yes. We could all talk about testimonies of how I've tried and failed, how we have tried and failed.

Yet Jesus does more than just giving us a list of rules. Don't do that. Do this. Don't be this way. Be that way. He comes in and He comes in our hearts.

[44 : 52] He gives us of His Holy Spirit and power from God Himself to now get up out of our sin to get on and to live wisely and to avoid temptation.

He gives us the power. He gives us the power and the right of refusal. The power and the right of refusal to temptation. He gives you by the Spirit the grace and strength to make, to mouth the words, get behind me Satan.

He gives you the strength to say, I will not go with you. I will not believe that lie. I will stop looking at this website. I will turn off this computer. I will trash it if I have to.

I will do whatever it takes Jesus to follow you. The Lord will, by His grace and power, help you to do that today. That's the promise of the Gospel. Not that simply we get up and clean ourselves.

No, it's that Jesus saves a sinner, cleanses a sinner, and then gives them the strength and power to obey. That's our hope. That's your hope this morning. That Jesus lives in you the hope of glory and now you can go from this place a different person, transformed, dealing with your temptations rightly.

[46 : 01] Because the tragedy of temptation shall be averted by the grace of God as we humbly respond in faith.

So I must speak to two people in concluding here. First, for those who may be here who do not believe in Jesus, I have showed you a tragedy that's coming to you. There is a tragedy that awaits your life.

Your life will be tragic. And I can make this as a promise to you. It's a sober promise. If you refuse Jesus Christ, your life will end with eternal tragedy.

Far worse than an ox being led to the slaughter. Far worse than a bird in a snare. Far worse than what happens here in chapter 7 of Proverbs. You will be led by God Himself, the judge of the universe, to hell.

You will pay for your sins and for your ignorance. You will pay for your unbelief that you have refused the Savior that God has held out for the world. So I call you to repentance.

[47 : 04] I call you to repent and believe in the gospel. God has sent His Son that you might be free, that you might be now with Him in His glory, and His grace today.

And for those, secondly, in concluding, for the believer, let's be prepared. Let's just be honest and prepared to walk out into this world, even in here, to walk in here.

Let's walk with both eyes open when it comes to temptation and sin. Let's not play like school children. Let's not play with it. Let's not recess. This is a battleground.

And may the Lord help each of us to become more interconnected in our fellowship, in our confession to one another, that we could fight together in the power that God gives to resist the devil and to flee from temptation.

And I know, as the Lord Jesus Himself taught us to pray, Lord, lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Do you not think the God who taught us to pray that will not answer it?

[48 : 05] Well, I call you to faith this morning that as you pray those very words, deliver me, Lord. Lead me. that not only would you pray it, but you would believe it. That God who sent forth His only Son to be your Savior will deliver you from all your temptations.

Will strengthen you to say no. So can I pray in that? Let's pray together.