Proverbs 6:26 – Exchange Rates

Dear Culture Contrarians:

Proverbs 6:26 is translated by the NKJV as follows:

For by means of a harlot *A man is reduced* to a crust of bread;

And an adulteress will prey upon his precious life.

Solomon is speaking to “his son,” a reference to young men, and he has been warning him against the words and beauty of an immoral woman. His reasons for the warning are given in verse 26. He uses an interesting preposition at the start of the verse. The NKJV translates it as “by means of,” which is a good translation. It’s a preposition that carries a *quid pro quo* nuance. In Job 2:4 Satan says, “skin for skin.” “For” is this preposition *bǎʿǎḏ*. In exchange for a woman prostitute (a literal reading of the Hebrew), a man is “taken as far as a crust of bread.”

The second half of the verse is not a repetition of the first. “Adulteress” in the NKJV represents the literal translation of “the woman of a man.” Solomon is now speaking about a married woman who engages in immorality. There are two kinds of women addressed in this verse, not one: the female prostitute and the wife of a man.

“Prey” translates a verb that means “to hunt” or “to lie in wait while hunting.” In the first half of the verse, the prostitute is paid and so receives something in exchange for sex. In the second half of the verse, the adulteress is paid with the valuable (precious, costly, valuable) soul of the man. The word translated “life” is literally “soul.”

Immorality not only causes people material loss, but emotional and soulish loss as well. The loss is universal and without exception. Our culture advertises the desirability of immorality, but rarely points out the cost.

Come study Proverbs with us from 7-8. Come early for a snack.

My love to you all,