



**Deut. 22:13-30**

***The Importance of Fidelity***

13 " If any man takes a wife, and goes in to her, and detests her,

14 "and charges her with shameful conduct, and brings a bad name on her, and says, 'I took this woman, and when I came to her I found she was not a virgin,'

15 "then the father and mother of the young woman shall take and bring out the evidence of the young woman's virginity to the elders of the city at the gate.

16 "And the young woman's father shall say to the elders, 'I gave my daughter to this man as wife, and he detests her.

17 'Now he has charged her with shameful conduct, saying, "I found your daughter was not a virgin," and yet these are the evidences of my daughter's virginity.' And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city.

18 "Then the elders of that city shall take that man and punish him;

19 "and they shall fine him one hundred shekels of silver and give them to the father of the young woman, because he has brought a bad name on a virgin of Israel. And she shall be his wife; he cannot divorce her all his days.

20 "But if the thing is true, and evidences of virginity are not found for the young woman,

21 "then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done a disgraceful thing in Israel, to play the harlot in her father's house. So you shall put away the evil from among you.

22 " If a man is found lying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die -- the man that lay with the woman, and the woman; so you shall put away the evil from Israel.

23 " If a young woman who is a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her,

24 "then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbor's wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you.

25 " But if a man finds a betrothed young woman in the countryside, and the man forces her and lies with her, then only the man who lay with her shall die.

26 "But you shall do nothing to the young woman; there is in the young woman no sin deserving of death, for just as when a man rises against his neighbor and kills him, even so is this matter.

27 "For he found her in the countryside, and the betrothed young woman cried out, but there was no one to save her.

28 " If a man finds a young woman who is a virgin, who is not betrothed, and he seizes her and lies with her, and they are found out,

29 "then the man who lay with her shall give to the young woman's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife because he has humbled her; he shall not be permitted to divorce her all his days.

30 " A man shall not take his father's wife, nor uncover his father's bed.

The last set of laws dealt primarily with the sixth commandment and they were difficult to preach on, because finding the common links between them is not necessarily easy. These passages deal with civil laws that applied the seventh commandment to the ancient state of Israel. They are difficult to preach on, because of the delicacy of the subjects involved. But I must tell you, in our current time I believe that there is no subject we need to hear addressed from the pulpit more than this one, not in a crass way but in a careful and a holy way:

**"A supposed obligation of propriety and delicacy has usually kept our pulpits silent concerning the sins of unchastity, and hence, no doubt, in large part, the shocking callousness and unsoundness of public opinion concerning the sins of its breach. It is my opinion that this omission should be corrected by the pastors. When I say this, I would not by any means be understood as encouraging ministers to disregard any sentiment of delicacy or propriety which may exist. On the contrary, all such sentiments, where not positively false, are to be honored by him, and he should be, in all his conversation, the model of delicacy. But there is a guarded and holy way of discussing such subjects, which clearly reveals chastity and not pruriency as its temper, and purity as its object. This is the style in which the pastor should speak on these difficult subjects." - Dabney**

Creation ordinance – marriage

This is the closest relationship possible for men outside of our union with Christ:

**Matt. 19:4 And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,'**

**5 "and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?**

**6 "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."**

In fact the relationship is so close that the Lord uses marriage as the ruling metaphor for His Covenant relationship between the Himself and his people.

When Israel went after false gods, God likened them to an adulterous wife. In the book of Hosea, for instance, the Lord instructs the prophet Hosea to marry a unfaithful woman, Gomer in order to graphically show the people how they have been unfaithful to Him: ***"Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry And children of harlotry, For the land has committed great harlotry By departing from the LORD."*** (Hosea 1:3)

The sanctity of marriage was not only important because it taught and reflects the relationship between Christ and believers but it was vital to the integrity of the family as the central unit in the covenant community. And indeed marriage and the family is the basis for the society. Therefore offences against the seventh commandment were not only a breaking of God's commandments and a sin against him (Joseph - How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?) and individuals but also the society as a whole. Adultery and unchastity are attacks on and undermine the basic institution of the family. And lest we forget, to quote Alan Harman, *"the family was the means of passing on the knowledge of God, and also the channel through which inheritance of the promised land was to be effected."* And if I might comment, the Devil knows that very well, and by attacking the institution of MARRIAGE he not only destroys the main building block of society, he also creates a dearth of Christian knowledge in the land. We live in a land where often there is no father to uphold that

baptismal oath to **“teach the principles of our religion”** to his children. And so the spread of the faith generationally is cut off.

Now reading these verses you should be able to detect the bible’s clear expectation of chastity before marriage and then fidelity to your spouse afterwards for both men and women. We sometimes have difficulty grasping that because the idea that a man or a woman should be chaste until marriage is unheard of these days, we have in fact reversed the biblical paradigm and now assume they *won’t be*.

The expectation of fidelity after marriage, has also taken a terrible hit. Polls tell us that over half of married people in America have had an extra-marital affair and our soaring divorce statistics bear that out. Linda Rumbaugh mentioned to me that a woman called into a talk show that was discussing Mark Sanford and simply stated her belief that all men are adulterers. While by the grace of God that isn’t the case, we can well understand why women might come to that conclusion.

I wish I could say that the church was the great exception, but when broad evangelicals and especially young evangelicals, their attitudes and behaviors often mirror those of the broader society. Sometimes they are even worse, grace is used as excuse for sin. Sadly it has been my experience that often presbyteries have become “wolf protection leagues” a pastor breaks the seventh commandment, is caught and sheds a few tears, and his fellow presbyters circle the wagons around him and are forgiving and restoring him before there is even real evidence of repentance. I heard one denominational authority talking about a youth pastor who had repeatedly violated the seventh commandment with girls in the youth group and was forgiven and restored twice in a row. The speaker was shocked and dismayed when he did it a third time. Frankly brothers and sisters, I wasn’t.

Well, in any event the passages break down into two major parts –  
 Offenses involving married women (vs. 13-22)  
 Offenses involving unmarried women (vs. 23-30)

Now the issue in verses 13-21 was that a man has married has paid the wedding dowry, and then has decided that he detests his new bride. So he brings an accusation either that the woman was not a virgin or even worse that she was carrying another man’s child at the time of the marriage and her parents had attempted to marry her off to a suitable suitor to cover up her sin. If this had been the case then the penalty for her unchastity was death. This interestingly enough should help you to understand what Joseph’s concern was in Matthew 1.

***Matt. 1:18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit.***

***19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.***

***20 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.***

***21 "And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins."***

Joseph had assumed that Mary had been unchaste, but did not want her to be stoned to death. God the Holy Spirit had to intervene at this point to let Joseph know what the actual circumstances were.

In any event, when such a false accusation was made, the parents would then bring forth the sheet from the wedding night, that the bride would keep, as evidence that she had been a virgin. In this case the husband who had falsely accused would be severely punished:

False accusation would result in punishment the word punish in verse 18 usually referring to a public flogging (vs. 18) and DOUBLE the normal bride price being paid by the man – for instance David bought Araunah's threshing floor and oxen for only 50 silver shekels. He also lost any future right to initiate a divorce. He had intended to rid himself of the woman by duplicity, now he can NEVER be rid of her.

This was intended to act as a Massive disincentive for bringing such a false charge. Some might say wouldn't she be better off divorced? The answer there is no. There was no social security net to protect unmarried women, and finding a husband in these circumstances would be even harder than normal. Read the book of Ruth if you want an exposition of how hard life was for a woman without a husband or grown sons.

If on the other hand his accusation is proven, the woman was to be stoned at the door of her father's house, adultery was a capital offense, and she had "played the harlot" in her father's house.

In verse 22 we see the case of consensual adultery by a man with a married woman. They are both to be put to death.

The next law in verses 23-24 concerns a woman who is betrothed. Now betrothal was much more serious in Israel than engagement is to us – contract has been made, bride price has been paid. The woman was married in all but actual fact. The man and woman is punished because she was all but married and the man is punished because he had seduced the betrothed of one of his fellow Israelites. Now the presumption is, that because she was in a city and would have been heard if she screamed, the act was consensual, therefore both are put to death.

However in verses 25-27 the case contemplates a countryside setting, it is different, it is presumed that she was raped which was unfortunately all too common as women would often be out working in the fields all day. How could anyone have heard her if she cried out? In this case the man alone is put to death. If men object well what if it was consensual, the answer is you still broke the commandment and became worthy of death the moment you did so. Whatever happened, it is certain she did not overpower and take advantage of you!

Now the word seizes in verse 28 is problematic, it is actually to take hold of – taphas – and the presumption in verses 28-29 is actually that she was seduced not raped. In any event the man did not have the right or the permission to do what he did and thus he must pay a hefty fine to the father and then the father *may, but does not have to allow him to marry her*. It is likely that he would because her chances of marriage after such a disgraceful thing was discovered were minimal.

Finally in verse 30. We have an absolute prohibition on a man marrying his step mother or one of his father's wives, most likely after his father had died. God wanted it made clear that although there was no biological relationship, it was still considered incestuous. Paul deals with exactly such a case in Corinthians 5:1 saying ***It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife.***

Now someone might complain, look these are Civil laws, Yes they are no longer in force, but the fact that the Lord is still against all forms of unchastity should be clear. And we need to understand, that a people who think nothing of adultery with people whom they can see, are even less likely to be faithful to the God that they can't see.

Others say "you can't expect that kind of behavior today." But at one time *we did*, and I would strongly argue that the elimination of our laws against adultery have become the death sentence of the family and without the family you have no society.

Fathers your childrens purity is YOUR responsibility – "It is intimated to parents that they must by all means possible preserve their children's chastity, by giving them good advice and admonition, setting them good examples, keeping them from bad company, praying for them, and laying them under needful restraints, because, if the children committed lewdness, the parents must have the grief and shame of the execution at their own door." – **Matthew Henry**

Finally, we must confess of all the kinds of adultery the worst is our infidelity to the Lord, all of us are like Gomer in that sense,

**Hosea 14:1 O Israel, return to the LORD your God, For you have stumbled because of your iniquity;**

**2 Take words with you, And return to the LORD. Say to Him, "Take away all iniquity; Receive us graciously, For we will offer the sacrifices of our lips.**

**3 Assyria shall not save us, We will not ride on horses, Nor will we say anymore to the work of our hands, 'You are our gods.' For in You the fatherless finds mercy."**

**4 " I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, For My anger has turned away from him.**

**Isaiah 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.**