

Let Marriage Be Held in Honor  
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All right, if you have your Bibles, be finding your way to the book of Hebrews, Chapter 13. I'm going to read the text, and then I want to read two other things before we begin to look at the text.

This morning, we come to Hebrews Chapter 13:4. We are instructed in this text,

“Let marriage be held in honor among all and let the marriage bed be undefiled for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.”

Now I want to read that to you as I've done a number of times from the Amplified Bible. The same verse in the Amplified Bible is rendered this way,

“Let marriage be held in honor, esteemed, worthy, precious, that is of great price and especially dear in all things. And thus let the marriage bed be kept undishonored or undefiled, for God will judge and punish the unchaste, all guilty of sexual vice, and adulterous.”

The other thing I wanted to read to you is the Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689, Chapter 25, on the subject of marriage. It's very brief, but it's very concise. It's very clear, it's very important. So I want to read to you the four articles in this chapter on marriage.

Article 1: Marriage is between one man and one woman. Neither is it lawful for any man to have more than one wife, nor for any woman to have more than one husband at the same time.

Article 2: Marriage was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with a legitimate issue and for preventing of uncleanness.

Article 3. It is lawful for all sorts of people to marry who are able with judgment to give their consent. Yet it is the duty of Christians to marry in the Lord. And therefore such as profess the true religion should not marry with infidels or idolaters Neither should such as are godly be unequally yoked by marrying with such as are wicked in their life, or maintain damnable heresy.

Article 4. Marriage ought not to be within the degrees of consanguinity. Nor can such incestuous marriage ever be made lawful by any law of man or consent of parties, so as those persons may live together as man and wife.

That's the four parts of the chapter on marriage in our Confession of Faith. This morning we come to a verse that seems to be kind of odd, it seems to be kind of strange if you've been following along with this study because it seems kind of to come out of nowhere.

Now remember we have come in chapter 12 to the final great comparison between Christianity and Judaism and the great theme of the book has been the superiority of Christianity and the inferiority of Judaism that Christ is Superior, Christ is sufficient, Christ is supreme, and that for them to leave the faith of Christ and to return back into Judaism would be to be the tragedy of all tragedies because Judaism cannot save. Judaism held within it pictures and shadows and it pointed toward Christ, but Christ had come. You no longer need the picture when you have the person, right? You no longer need the ritual or the ceremony when you have the reality of the salvation right in front of your eyes in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. This has been the theme of the epistle.

All throughout this epistle, we've seen that Christ is enough, that Christ is superior, that Christ is supreme, that Christ is sufficient, that Christ came to do what the law could not do, that Christ came to accomplish what all of their efforts in Judaism could never have accomplished, because by the works of the law, no flesh will be justified in the sight of God.

That final argument has been made. We talked a little bit about this. It seems like in all of the epistles of Paul, there is a point where once the theological argument is made, well, then he begins to turn to how that they are to live in light of those great truths. that they are to receive and that they are to believe. It's not enough to sit around, and we sometimes are guilty of this as Christians, to sit around and talk about all the things that we believe and all the things that we understand if we don't ever allow those to be translated into the way that we live our lives, right?

I mean, I can sit around and talk about my views on the second coming of Christ, but it doesn't affect the way that I live my life. It doesn't make me want to be ready for when he comes, or prepared for when he comes, or obedient when he comes, or trusting him when he comes, in his will when he comes. What good does it do me if I know a lot, but I practice a little? And I'm guilty of that. We're all guilty of that to some degree.

It's grievous to me that I know so much, but I seem to experience so little. It's grievous to me that I understand so many theological truths and realities and principles, but I feel sometimes when I examine my own life that I experience the benefit or the blessing of them to a much smaller degree than I ought to. And of that, I repent. But the reality is that that argument has been made in the book of Hebrews. He has proven that Christ is superior. He has proven that to go back to Judaism would be to go back to an eternity of lostness and hopelessness and helplessness. Because the faith truly received is a faith that must be continued in. There must be perseverance. There must be endurance.

It's not enough, and this is a tragedy in our culture, especially in this area of the country, that people make professions of faith when their children never lived for Christ throughout the length and course of their lives, and then somehow they manufacture a hope that they're going to heaven when they die, when they have absolutely no grounds upon which to believe and to have assurance, because they just made a profession of faith. They had a feeling, an emotional experience. But there was no ongoing life of obedience and ongoing life of faith. And this is, you know, one of the great themes of this letter.

The argument's been made, and now in this last chapter, the writer is being moved by the Holy Spirit to, again, apply to them how that they are to live as a result of these truths. Now this is a short section compared to some of the epistles, but in this last chapter the writer is being moved by the Holy Spirit to bring to bear certain exhortations and commands about how that they are to live their lives in light of the truth of what God has done for them in sending Jesus to rescue them and to redeem them.

For two weeks, we looked at the first three verses of chapter 13, and we talked about brotherly love. "Let brotherly love continue." And then in verse two and three, you've got two practical ways that brotherly love can be expressed in a believer's life. One of them being hospitality, and the other being real sympathy. And then we come to verse four, and verse four seems almost out of place because you go from three verses about brotherly love, and then all of a sudden, you've got a verse about marriage. "Let marriage be held in honor among all and let the marriage bed be undefiled for God will judge the sexually immoral and the adulterous."

I want to say to you, in my opinion, you can think differently if you want to. But in my opinion, there is a connection between brotherly love and a right view of marriage. One of the most unloving things that can ever happen is for someone to commit adultery against their mate. It's one of the most cruel, one of the most heartbreaking, one of the most devastating, one of the most destructive things that a human being can ever live through. And it's one of the most, it's one of the greatest acts of lovelessness. It's one of the greatest acts.

We live in a culture where people will commit adultery and then they'll tell the mate that they committed adultery and violated their marriage covenant. But, I want you to understand, I did do this and I'm sorry, but I still love you.

No, no, no, no. That's the greatest act of lovelessness that a human being can ever live through and go through. And I believe that when the writer is being moved by the Holy Spirit to bring to bear how that they are to live as believers in a world that rejects the truth of the gospel, as he's talking about how that they are to live in brotherly love toward one another, that they are to show hospitality to their brothers and sisters in Christ, that they are to show sympathy and concern to their brothers and sisters in Christ, I think that he begins to realize that this also has to come home in one of the greatest acts of unbrotherly love or one of these greatest acts of lovelessness is the terrible sin and wrong of adultery.

Adultery is one of the most unloving things that a person can ever do. And it's not just that they're doing it to a stranger, they're doing it to a person that they have entered into a lifelong covenant with, and that they have promised to love till their dying breath, until their last day.

Now this is important for the church. And the reason it's important for the church is because we're supposed to be different from this world and we're supposed to live by a different ethic. We're supposed to manifest to the world the will of God concerning a lot of things. But one of the things that we're supposed to manifest to the world is the will of God concerning sex and the will of God concerning marriage and the will of God concerning faithfulness in the context of marriage.

This is so against a godless society. You have to realize we are swimming upstream when we're preaching this to this world we're living in. Especially since the 1960s and what they call the sexual revolution, which they should have called the sexual ruin because it's ruined our land. and it's destroyed the family and it's destroyed marriages. The reality is this is important to the church because the church is built upon healthy marriages, and the church is built upon healthy families.

This is important to society because society is built upon the family, and when the marriage collapses, the family collapses. And when the family collapses, society gradually begins to collapse and to fall apart. Our country is not dying because of something that's going on in Washington. Our country is dying because of what's going on in people's homes. That's what's really happening. It's the collapse of the family.

You may know of the studies about the problems in the black community and the problems of criminality in the black community, you know that every study that they come up with really comes to the same conclusion. The greatest problem is fatherlessness. There isn't a daddy. They have no daddy. There's no father the home.

Don't tell them what I'd have been if I hadn't had a daddy. Don't tell them what kind of a criminal I'd have turned out to be if I hadn't been a daddy. What we're living in is we're living in a day when we're about to be swept away by a flood that began with little sprinkles of rain back decades ago. Now the society is at the point of just utter collapse because of our rejection of biblical truth in regards to the family and in regards to the home.

This is absolutely imperative for society. If you want to destroy a country, destroy the marriage union, destroy the family, destroy the home and if you want to destroy a culture, you destroy marriage and take daddy away from the kids or take mama away from the kids. If you want to destroy a culture, and I believe that Satan has been working on for decades and decades and decades: destroy the marriage union and destroy the family unit as it is revealed in scripture and ordained of God.

We have gone a long way to ruining and devastating a whole culture and a whole country, and we're living through this. All we want to do is spend money and have a new government program to try to fix what can't be fixed apart from going back to what God has revealed in scripture and doing things the way that God has ordained.

Let me ask you a question: Is it or is it not true that if you have a machine and you want to know how it works and you're having problems with it, where do you go? You go to who made it. It is God that created man, and it's God that ordained these things, but it's man that's rejected them and thinks that he can be happy and be blessed apart from the will and the word of God. This runs so counter.

What we're going to talk about this morning is so against our society, it's so against our culture, it's so against this world. I want to tell you, we have a real crisis in our country, a real crisis of manhood and a real crisis of womanhood. The reality is that marriage is gradually going by the wayside, just like Christian funerals are going by the wayside. It used to be a given. Someone dies, they're going to call a preacher, they're going to open up the Bible, read the word of God, and there'll be at least a presentation of the truth of God at the funeral.

Well, now they have some flower child come and they sit around their casket and sing Kumbaya, don't tell anybody about God. That's happening when it comes to the funerals and that's, happening when it comes to the subject of marriage.

I've had people tell me, it's just a piece of paper. No, it's much more than a piece of paper. I've had people tell me, well, that's just an invention of man. No, it's not an invention of man. It is a thing, an institution ordained of the creator of the universe for the benefit of man. It's not something that men invented. And by the way, you ladies, if you've been drinking at the fountain of modern feminism, it's not something that man created to try to bring you into slavery and bondage. It is something of God, for your blessing, for your benefit, for your protection.

And if you won't amen that, I'll run back there and amen it myself.

It's the truth, whether you like it or not. We're being overwhelmed by deceptions. We're being overwhelmed by lies. We went away from the Bible. We went away from what God has said and we think we're smarter than God. Our culture thinks it's smarter than God. So we're being overwhelmed by all these deceptions, and one of the deceptions is you don't want to get married because you don't want to be some man's slave or some man's servant. No, you want to be a man's wife. The man should be to you what God intends for him to be.

So three things. (You're not going to have a stroke this morning, are you? Because some of you look like you're really struggling.) Three things I want to talk to you about from this text, Hebrews 13:4 this morning. First of all, the proper view of marriage. We're told in the text, let marriage be held in honor among all. Marriage is to be seen as a thing of great value. Marriage is to be seen as a thing of great importance, a thing of great worth. A thing that is to be honored and lifted up and elevated and valued. Marriage is not to be denigrated. Marriage is not to be denied. Marriage is not to be redefined. Marriage is to be held up in our hearts, in our minds, in our lives, and in our actions as a thing of great worth, a thing of great value among all peoples. and among all societies wherever they may be on this earth that God created.

Understand that that is talking about marriage as marriage is defined in scripture. It is not one of the modern redefinitions of marriage. It is marriage as marriage is defined in scripture. The Bible does describe and define what marriage is. All you need to do to see what marriage is not is to go to the book that God has given us and see what marriage is.

Let's get it right out front. Two men cannot be in a marriage to each other. Two women cannot be in a marriage. That's not marriage. That's not biblical marriage. And our confession of faith that I read to you really is basically just in a real concise way reminding us of what the Bible reveals marriage to be. Marriage is between one man and one woman. It is a covenant before God and with each other for life. It is a covenant. So it's marriage as God defines marriage that is to be held in high esteem in our hearts and in our minds.

Now, why is this so? Well, first of all, it's so because it is instituted by God. It was ordained of God. How early? Genesis chapter two. We read the text in our responsive reading this morning. It's the Lord God that

made man, and it's the Lord God that made woman. God made Adam, and then God declares that it is not good for the man to be alone. And then God, instead of creating something completely outside of Adam, he causes a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, takes a rib from Adam and from that rib, he creates the woman and he brings her to the man and gives her to him as a gift because God determined it's not good for the man to be alone. It's from God. God ordained it. It's the first institution that God ever revealed and ordained.

Marriage precedes the church. Marriage is the first institution that God gives to man. It is of God. It's ordained of God. It is from God. It is governed by God's revelation and by God's word. What God says it is, it is. And what God reveals that it cannot be, it cannot be. Another thing, not only was it ordained of God, do you realize that when Christ was here on earth, the son of God, that he honored and magnified marriage? Did you know that Jesus, the first miracle he ever did was, guess where? At a marriage. It was at a marriage that he turned the water into wine. It was at a marriage. Jesus honored a marriage by going to a marriage. If marriage was not important, he wouldn't have even bothered to go there, but he honored marriage by his attendance at a marriage and by working his first great miracle at a marriage.

In the teachings of Jesus, the marriage, the whole concept of marriage, the truth of marriage is woven into the teachings of Jesus and the stories that Jesus told. Jesus concerned himself in his earthly ministry with talking about divorce and talking about different subjects relating to marriage and to use marriage in his illustrations.

So Jesus himself in his earthly ministry, he honored marriage. Isn't it significant that the church is like a bride and Jesus is like a bridegroom? We have woven throughout the New Testament the language of marriage where we're told that the relationship that the church has with Jesus is like the relationship that the husband has with his wife. Scripture says a lot to elevate marriage, to define marriage, to govern marriage, and to protect marriage in the Old Testament as well as in the New.

There are large sections of the book of Proverbs that talk about marriage and adultery and that are stark and sober warnings about it. It is absolutely clear from the word of God that the reason that we should honor marriage is because God has honored marriage. God has placed an honor upon marriage. This is absolutely vital to the church. I understand that the church is made up of individuals that are saved, but also do you understand that the very material that the church is built out of in every generation is families? Christian families. It's dads that are saved and leading their family in the ways of God. It's moms that are saved and that are leading their children in the ways of God. It's children that are hearing the gospel at home and then being brought to the assembly and hearing the gospel there.

You understand that what we're supposed to be doing today is sowing seed that will bear fruit for another generation to be in the church and to serve Christ. among the saints. The very heart of the church is the family. I was thinking if I live a few more years, I will have been preaching 40 years, three more years, and I will have been preaching 40 years. So I've been in a lot of churches and I've been in a lot of services. And I'm going to tell you, the church is made up of families. It's mamas and daddies and kids. It's kids coming to Sunday school. It's kids being taught the gospel and God working in their hearts. I'm not denying they may grow up and they may leave the church, but they may get saved later and they may come to church at some later point. It may not be this church. It may be another group of believers that they're called upon to serve Christ among.

But the church is made up of families. Someone said the hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world. The problem is no one's rocking the cradle here in America any more. They're growing up wild. They're growing up without anybody to pray for them, anybody to teach them, anybody to love them, anybody to take them to the house of God.

It used to you could have stopped a child on the street in America and begin to talk to him about Jesus and at least they knew something about him. You're liable to go and stop a child on the street of America today and they go, who is Jesus? What are you talking about? It's a whole different time.

Another thing, it's vital not only to the church, it's vital to society. Our country is collapsing. It's not collapsing because a Chinese army is getting ready to invade the West Coast. It's not collapsing because Russian paratroopers are getting ready to land in some part of our country. Our country is collapsing because the family is dying.

Nobody knows what a man is anymore. Nobody knows what a woman is anymore. Nobody, and we've got a bunch of children trying to raise children. We've got a bunch of people that don't know what it means to be a man, and that's what their boys are learning what men are like from. We've got ladies that don't know what it means to be a woman, and that's what their daughters are learning women are like.

The best things I learned from my parents were not the things they said, it's the things they did. It's what they were, not just what they said, it's what they were. They didn't say a lot, they did a lot, but they didn't say a lot. It's vital to society. The family is the foundation upon which a peaceful and prosperous society are built. And our nation is dying because marriage is dying and the family is dying. And we're reaping the whirlwind. That's why.

The collapse is from within. The ruin is from within. The rot is from within. That brings me to the second thing. The proper view of marriage. The second thing is the protection of marriage. Let marriage be held in honor among all. And let the marriage bed be undefiled.

Now this second statement or this second little section or clause in verse four says, let the marriage bed be undefiled. This this does a number of things. First of all, it reveals to us and reminds us of the truth that the sexual union between husband and wife in marriage is a good thing. It's of God. There's nothing wrong with the sexual union between the husband and the wife. This is proper. This is the will of God. This is ordained of God. This is blessed of God. It's a good thing. There's nothing wrong with sex. What's wrong is the perversion of it, the corruption of it by the mind and the heart that refuses to bow to the word of God.

This is a command to protect marriage. And the last statement in the verse makes it clear. Let marriage be held in honor among all and let the marriage bed be undefiled for God will judge the sexually immoral and the adulterous.

Why is this for the protection of marriage? It is because there is nothing that compares to sexual sin in its ability to devastate and to destroy marriage. Sexual sin is the devastator, the destroyer of marriage. Unfaithfulness, not keeping your marriage covenant, not keeping your marriage vow. Now think about the significance of this. Is it not interesting? Have you ever thought about this? Is it not interesting that when God gave the moral law on Mount Sinai, he gave 10 commandments? Just 10 commandments, and one of those regarded the sin of adultery.

His commandments that were to govern the life of His creatures. If this is not some serious issue, why would one of the Ten Commandments be, "You shall not commit adultery?" Sexual sin, adultery, unfaithfulness is devastating. It's devastating. It's devastating to those who it's committed against, and it's devastating in time to the one that commits it.

It's an evil spoken of everywhere in the Word of God. There's verse after verse, text after text, Old Testament, New Testament. It's woven throughout the Word of God. Have you ever thought about this? This is interesting to me, that when Jesus was questioned about divorce, the only exception he gave regarding divorce was adultery. Adultery could devastate and destroy the marriage covenant to the point that it was irreconcilable. He gave that as a provision and an excuse, an exception, regarding divorce. This sin destroys. It devastates. It devours.

It does so in marriage after marriage after marriage. It devastates children. It devastates families. It breaks the hearts of wives. It breaks the hearts of husbands. By the way, this view that only men commit adultery is a lie. This is swept across our country to where many women are just as immoral and unfaithful and ungodly as

men. This is devastating. It's devastating. It destroys the marriage trust. It destroys the marriage covenant, and it destroys the family. Few people ever survive it.

By the way, it eventually always comes out. You can't hide it from God. God knows. It eventually always comes out. and it will eventually reap its bitter fruit. It eventually will bring forth its bitter poison into your life. You can think you've enjoyed the pleasures of sin for a season, but I'm telling you, reckoning day is coming. Reckoning day is coming. Godless people reject this and because of that, they reap the whirlwind.

Christians are to live by a different ethic, a different principle. If anybody in the world should be faithful, Christian men and Christian women should be faithful and keep their marriage covenant. Marriage is to be protected because a lot's at stake. Your kids are at stake. Their future is at stake. Their security is at stake.

You have to understand, we're living in a society where if you watch a movie, adultery is no worse than getting a parking ticket. As a matter of fact, it's elevated, it's glorified. And you're continually bombarded with the message, it's about you, if it feels good, do it. The problem is, They don't, you know, Satan never shows you the end of it. He shows you the beginning of it. He tempts you with the beginning of it, but he never shows you the end of it.

I love you. There is nobody in here I don't love, but don't ever come to me and say, "I've met someone at work and I believe God has brought them into my life." You're getting ready to see something you don't want to see. If you ever come to me and tell me that, God never does that. Never. God hates divorce. The scripture says God hates divorce.

Protect your marriage. Let the marriage bed be undefiled. Love your wife. Love your husband. Be faithful. Keep your covenant. You may say they are a difficult person. Well, you are too. You have got to keep falling in love over and over again. You have to, because let me say this, love is not an emotion as much as it's a choice. I am devoting myself and giving myself to this person to serve them the rest of my life. I realize that I'm going to get older, and they're going to get older, and we're going to have challenges, and we're going to face problems, and we're going to have trials, and one of us may get sick, or both of us may get sick, but the promise is to God.

I try to tell young people whenever I am called upon to perform a wedding that you better understand what marriage and what love is. Love is giving yourself to serve. So the proper view of marriage, let the marriage bed be held in honor among all, the protection of marriage, and let the marriage bed be undefiled.

The verse closes with the promise of judgment. For God will judge the sexually immoral and the adulterous. A stark but clear statement of certainty. God will judge the sexually immoral and the adulterous. God sees, God knows, God cares, and God will judge. The sexually immoral there is, I think that would be rendered fornicators in the King James Version. It's those who are guilty of sexual sin outside of marriage. The adulterous are those who are guilty of sexual sin within the marriage who violate the marriage covenant and go and have sex with someone other than the person that they have entered into the marriage covenant with. It's the unfaithful people.

By the way, Isn't it funny how we redefine things? Isn't it funny how adultery is termed an affair? Like it's just an outing, a trip to the beach. We don't want to call it adultery, it's an affair. It's funny how we redefine things to make them sound less terrible than they really are. These people who fall into this, these people who practice it habitually, have an appointment with God. For God will judge the sexually immoral and the adulterers.

And let me tell you something, here's the problem. Because God is patient and God is long-suffering and God is gentle and God is kind, they think God's indifferent. So they think they can sin with impunity. And they think that they can sin and God is indifferent to the sin of sexual immorality, but he's not. You are sowing seed that will reap a harvest and a bitter harvest -- it will be. He's patient, but he's not indifferent. He's gentle, but

he's not indifferent. He's kind, but it's not that he doesn't care. And accounting for this sin will certainly and surely come.

There is a temporal reaping and then there will be an eternal reckoning for this sin. This is the truth regardless of what the world thinks, regardless of what the world says. The sexual revolution has devastated marriage and devastated the family, devastated our children, And in turn now it's devastated our country, our culture, and our society. We're reaping what's been sown. And the only way to reap anything differently is to sow differently.

Now don't misunderstand, God is gracious. God will forgive sin. He will forgive the sin of sexual immorality. He will forgive adultery. But the sinner must repent and turn from that sin and come to the cross. And if he doesn't or she doesn't, the sin will be judged. And there will be a reaping of what has been sown.

The marriage bed, the marriage is to be held in honor. It's to be valued. Listen, it's amazing how twisted things have become. People today want their kids to be rich instead of to be a mother or a father. Some will say, "I just want my kid to go to the university and become rich and become important and become significant." Women are shamed. for wanting to be mothers, for wanting to, you know, I want to invest my life in money.

Listen, my grandmother, when she died, lived to be 98 years old, never had a driver's license. I don't know whether she ever left the state of Kentucky, but I can say this, when she died, I stood over her body and looked at her hands, those old aged worn hands, and I thought of all the ways they had loved me and ministered to me and served me and cared for me. She died a queen among women. Not because she was the CEO of anything, but because she lived her life for her family.

You understand that being significant is not being wealthy. It's not being famous. It's fulfilling your God-given role in a way that honors God and brings glory to his name. And if your God-given role is to be a dad and a mom and to raise your family. The greatest thing my mom ever did is her five kids. Not because we're perfect, not because we're significant, not because we're rich, but because they did right by us.

Keep your promises. And remember that the marriage covenant is a promise to God as well as to your mate. Keep your promises, keep your covenants. And understand that if you don't, there's a consequence to it. Not only for you, but for others as well.