

“Sex Before Marriage”
Exodus 22:16-17
(Preached at Trinity, April 13, 2008)

I’m supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord’s Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I’ll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we’ve seen, this section of the Book of Exodus God begins to give a lengthy application to the Law given on Mount Sinai. It lasts for three chapters. In **Chapter 24** we find that this section of Exodus was called the “Book of the Covenant.”
2. The “Book of the Covenant” is based on the Ten Commandments. It contains civil laws based upon the Moral law. We’ve seen that the first section of the “Book of the Covenant,”
 - A. **Verses 1-11 of Chapter 21**, speaks on the subject of masters and slaves.
 - B. The second half of **Chapter 21** deals with matters of personal injury. It is divided into three sections: **Capital Crimes, Personal Injuries, Criminal Negligence**
 - C. As we continued into **Chapter 22** we found practical application to the Moral Law in the daily lives of His people. **Verses 1-15** deal specifically with the matter of personal property. God is describing the just and merciful way of dealing with a situation when someone is the cause of another person losing what rightfully belongs to him.

These passages are speaking of justice as it ought to be.
3. As we come to **Verses 16-17** we find a very brief section dealing with the matter of sex before marriage. This is a very important section particularly as we consider the morals of our day. God has much to say in His Word concerning the matter of sex and marriage.
 - A. The Bible is rich in spiritual truth. It is the rule by which we must live. Jesus told Satan in as an absolute truth,
Matthew 4:4 – “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”
 - B. Paul wrote:
2 Timothy 3:16-17 – “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: ¹⁷ That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”
4. There is much truth in these two verses. May God give us great discernment and understanding as we look at them.
 - I. First, we find here the nature of Biblical marriage
 - A. The first thing done in Israel was betrothal
Exodus 22:16 – “And if a man entice a maid that is not betrothed”
 1. Betrothal was similar to engagement but not the same. Engagement is simply a promise of marriage but it can easily be ended.
 2. The betrothal was a binding agreement – an absolute commitment
The couple pledged their troth to each other before witnesses.
 3. It was very similar to marriage but without the sexual dimension
 4. After the betrothal the couple would enter into the covenant of marriage

- B. The young woman had to have the permission of her father
1. The young lady was under the authority of her father
 2. She was to about to pass from the authority of her father to the authority of her husband.
 3. We often see the authority of the father over his daughter in the Bible.
 4. Children remain under the authority of their parents, particularly the daughters
 5. This has also been the custom in Western culture - a young man asks the father of his bride for her hand in marriage.
At the ceremony the father gives away the bride
 6. The father also aids his son in selecting a bride
A beautiful picture of this is found in Christ and the church
God has chosen a bride for His Son - she is remaining pure and chaste until the wedding
- C. The next thing was that the groom pays the “brides-price”
1. We can see this in the case of Jacob and Rachel
Jacob was willing to work seven years for her
Genesis 29:18 – “And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years for Rachel thy younger daughter.”
 2. Shechem willing to pay the brides-price for Dinah
Genesis 34:11-12 – “And Shechem said unto her father and unto her brethren, Let me find grace in your eyes, and what ye shall say unto me I will give. ¹² Ask me never so much dowry and gift, and I will give according as ye shall say unto me: but give me the damsel to wife.”
 3. David killed 200 Philistines for the hand of Saul’s daughter
1 Samuel 18:25-27 – “And Saul said, Thus shall ye say to David, The king desireth not any dowry, but an hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to be avenged of the king's enemies. But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines. ²⁶ And when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to be the king's son in law: and the days were not expired. ²⁷ Wherefore David arose and went, he and his men, and slew of the Philistines two hundred men; and David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full tale to the king, that he might be the king's son in law. And Saul gave him Michal his daughter to wife.”
 4. Caleb demanded the taking of land for his daughter Achsah
Joshua 15:16-17 – “And Caleb said, He that smiteth Kirjathsepher, and taketh it, to him will I give Achsah my daughter to wife. ¹⁷ And Othniel the son of Kenaz, the brother of Caleb, took it: and he gave him Achsah his daughter to wife.”
 5. We can see it demonstrated in creation - Adam gave of himself
Genesis 2:22 – “And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.”

6. Jesus gave of His very life for His bride
Ephesians 5:25-27 – “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; ²⁶ That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

- D. It is only with this concept of marriage is sexual activity allowed
1. Strict guidelines are to be followed - The father’s permission, betrothal, brides-price, marriage covenant.
 - a. We should follow these principles today
 - b. Children, especially daughters, are under the authority of their father
 - c. Courtship follows the principle of betrothal – the element of commitment
 - d. The concept of brides-price is seen as the young man sees the great value of his bride-to-be and is willing to submit to the demands of her father
 2. Only after the covenant of marriage was the couple permitted to consummate the marriage with sexual union.

II. In this text before us tonight we find a couple that followed a different path

- A. They have bypassed all of the Biblical demands
1. The maiden’s father was not consulted – She was taken without his permission
 2. There was no betrothal – no commitment
 3. There was no brides-price paid – There is no evidence that this young man saw the great value of this young lady
 The standard amount was 50 shekels of silver which is 10-15 thousand dollars.
 4. Most important, there was no marriage – they were not legally able to do that which is allowed for married couples alone.
- B. The text tells us that the man enticed the woman
1. The Hebrew word is פְּתָח pathah - to be simple, naïve, to be deceived, be gullible
 2. He treated her as a simple, naïve, gullible girl.
 - a. He didn’t treat her with respect recognizing her great value
 - b. He didn’t show concern for what he was taking from her and from her father.
 - c. He didn’t promise her a commitment that is to accompany this behavior.
 3. She behaved like a silly young girl
 - a. She didn’t have respect to her father
 - b. She didn’t recognize her great worth and the great value of what she was giving up
 - c. She willingly gives up her virginity – she is a fool.
 She foolishly believed the words of the young man and gave up her holiness.

- C. Another thing the text tells us is she was not betrothed
1. She had not been promised to another man
Remember, betrothal was a legal binding agreement
 2. This is what made the sudden pregnancy of Mary so devastating
Matthew 1:18-19 – “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. ¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.”
 3. But the girl in this text is not betrothed – not promised to another man.
 4. This is an important distinction. Had she been betrothed the penalty would be death. This would have been equal to adultery
Deuteronomy 22:25 – “But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die:”
- D. God provided a solution
1. This was a great act of mercy from God. This was a violation of the Seventh Commandment.
 2. They were to get married
Deuteronomy 22:28 – “If a man find a damsel *that is* a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found; ²⁹ Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty *shekels* of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days.”
 3. Marriage, however, was not automatic. She still had to receive the consent of her father.
Exodus 22:17 – “If her father utterly refuse to give her unto him, he shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins.”
 4. If the father examined the young man and determined that he was not suitable for his daughter he still had to pay the bride-price of 50 shekels of silver. Such behavior was very costly.
 - a. Such wisdom must still be practiced today
 - b. Just because a young girl becomes pregnant does not automatically mean marriage should result.
 - c. The father should have the right to decide whether he will give his daughter to this young man.

III. What does this have to teach us today? Much indeed

- A. The first thing we must see here is the sanctity of marriage.
Our society, our culture teaches young men and women today that such behavior is perfectly permissible.
1. Look at television or the movies – sex outside of marriage is seen as normal. No commitment is necessary in order to sleep together.
 2. And apparently people are buying into the lie.
 - a. On March 11, 2008 the Center for Disease Control released the results of a study that concluded that 3.2 million teenage girls have a STD – that’s one in four!

- b. 50-60% of marriages begin with the couples cohabitating compared to 10% in 1975
 - 3. The Bible teaches something far different
 - a. God sees sex outside of marriage as particularly vile
Hebrews 13:4 – “Marriage *is* honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”
1 Corinthians 6:9 – “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers. . . .”
 - b. This is infinitely true for the believer. God demands that we be pure, holy, chaste.
1 Corinthians 6:15-20 – “Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make *them* the members of an harlot? God forbid. ¹⁶ What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. ¹⁷ But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. ¹⁸ Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. ¹⁹ What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? ²⁰ For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”
 - c. Jesus Christ has purchased us. He owns us. His Spirit dwells in us.
 - d. We must keep our bodies pure
 - 4. We must teach our young people that their bodies belong to their mates.
 - a. They must keep themselves pure and chaste until their wedding night
 - b. This means they shouldn't even kiss someone who isn't their mate. It is no more proper for a single teenager to kiss someone than it is for a married person to kiss someone who isn't their mate.
- B. The second thing we must learn from this passage is the danger of living by our feelings.
 - 1. This young couple was acting solely on how they felt. Their behavior was based solely on the level of their emotions – their feelings. The young man saw what he wanted and then enticed the young lady.
 - 2. Most people today live this way. They see something they want and they take it.
 - 3. We must be able to govern our feelings.
1 Peter 1:13-16 – “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; ¹⁴ As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: ¹⁵ But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; ¹⁶ Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

4. We must live according to objective truth, not subjective feelings.
1 Peter 2:11 – “Dearly beloved, I beseech *you* as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;”

Conclusion:

1. There are two courses of behavior you might take.
 - a. The world tells you to satisfy your lusts. Go for what you desire.
 - b. God tells us, obey My Law.
2. The world will lead you to sin and misery
God will lead you to joy and life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
3. Which course will you follow?
God has called us to be holy. Look at the last verse of this chapter
Exodus 22:31 – “And ye shall be holy men unto me”