

## **BREAKING COVENANT WITH YOUR MARRIAGE PARTNER**

### EXODUS 20:14

Introduction:

Have you heard about the Wicked Bible? The 1631 edition of the King James Version was known as the Wicked Bible. In Exodus 20:14, our text for tonight, the word “not” was left out. It read: “Thou shalt commit adultery.” From the behavior of many in our society you would think that they have been reading the Wicked Bible.

The studies on human behavior give us mixed reports. Some have reported that 40 to 50 percent of all married men have had extramarital affairs.

Another study indicated that 70 per cent of the men under 40 have been unfaithful to their wives. However I have read of another report that claims these numbers are grossly inflated. Another scientific study reports that only 3 percent to 4 percent have a sexual partner outside of their marriage, and only about 15 percent have ever cheated on their marriage partner. It is worth remembering that some of those reporting the larger percentages are also advocates of a different lifestyle. They want to remove the stigma from this kind of behavior in order to justify their own lifestyle.

However all the studies do indicate that adultery is more frequent among the younger age group.

What we are dealing with is a moral code that was given to Israel more than three thousand years ago. Everyone knows that we are a much more advanced society scientifically. Could it be that the basis for that moral code is no longer valid? What is involved in adultery?

You may have heard about the fourth graders definition of adultery. The children's minister asked the children, "Which is the hardest commandment for you to keep?" Most of the children responded, "Thou shalt not commit adultery."

The children's minister was shocked by the answer. But then he asked, "What does it mean to commit adultery?" The little boy responded without blinking an eye, "Thou shalt not sass back to adults." Seriously what does it mean, and why did God make it one of the Big Ten?

#### I. ADULTERY VIOLATES THE MARRIAGE COVENANT.

This commandment was given by God for the protection of the first institution the Creator gave to the man and woman. The family was God's first gift to the first couple. He made them for each other and joined them together in the blessed state of matrimony. When they fell into sin, this first institution was suddenly in danger.

## 1. Marriage is based on a covenant.

When God performed the first marriage, joined the first couple together, He made it clear that the relationship was to be a covenant between them. His will for the marriage was revealed in what He said to them: “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24) “United” has the idea of being joined in covenant.

God would later use this idea of the marriage covenant to describe His relationship with His people Israel. The descendants of Abraham were His bride and He was joined to them by covenant. This was a theme that was constantly declared by the prophets.

The prophet Malachi refers to the marriage covenant as he confronts his generation with their unfaithfulness: “You ask, ‘Why’? It is because the Lord is acting as a witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.” (Malachi 2:14)

## 2. The sexual union of the man and woman seals the covenant.

This Biblical idea has been lost in the sexual revolution of our day. In the eyes of the Lord it is the first sexual union of the couple that seals the marriage. Something more than the physical happens in the sexual union of

the couple. It is more than just an experience of sensual pleasure. The two actually become “one flesh”. They become joined at a deeper level—even at a spiritual level. This is why it is so important for the unmarried to wait until marriage to be joined to another person sexually.

3. The covenant is broken if either party has a sexual relationship with another person of either sex.

Do you see the seriousness of adultery? When you have been joined to another person in a marriage covenant, and it has been sealed by the sexual union of your bodies, and you then join yourself to another person sexually, you have violated the covenant. You have broken the covenant. Jesus gave emphasis to this when questioned about conditions for divorce. He declared that sexual unfaithfulness was the only thing that could destroy the covenant: “I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another commits adultery.” (Matthew 19:9) This marital unfaithfulness should be understood as sexual unfaithfulness. No wonder God put this command in the Big Ten. This act threatens the most basic unit of society. But there is more!

## II. ADULTERY STEALS FROM OTHERS.

Whatever affects this basic unit of the family affects an even larger circle of people. The adulterer is actually a thief, a robber. He or she steals from others that they ought to love something that is very basic.

1. Adultery steals from the other person's partner or future partner something you had no right to take.

There are never just two people involved in an adulterous relationship. There will be at least three, and maybe four. There is at least one other marriage partner, and possibly two. If you commit adultery with another married person, then your partner and their partner are involved. If you as a married person have sex with an unmarried person, then there is just your partner. Do you realize what you have taken from the other persons involved? Do you realize the pain and loss that you have brought into their lives? Do you realize that you have taken something from them that you had no right to take?

You may protest: "But it was only sex! We did not mean to hurt anyone." But you did! You took something from them that you will never be able to restore.

2. Adultery steals from the children the stable family they need.

One of the basic needs of each child is a safe, stable family. For emotional and spiritual health they need this almost as much as they need food shelter

and clothing. We probably have youth here tonight who could bear testimony to the loss they felt when Dad or Mom moved out because of an adulterous relationship. We usually cover it over with nicer words in our day, but if we use God's vocabulary it is "adultery". The children lost their secure family because a parent violated the covenant of marriage.

It is noteworthy that God lists this as a primary concern when He announces His hatred for divorce through Malachi. He declares that He made them one because He wanted a "godly seed". He wanted young people to grow up in the stability of a godly home so they would have a chance in life to become godly persons. When adultery happens, the children are the losers!

### 3. Adultery steals from your parents the joy they deserve.

The circle grows even wider—two sets of parents and could be even grandparents—four sets—are involved. Every godly parent prays for and dreams about a stable, happy marriage for their sons and daughters. They go through an indescribable pain when their dreams are shattered by one of the marriage partners violating the covenant through adultery. They will not want to talk about it. They will still love their son or daughter, even he or she is the guilty party, but it hurts. I get cold chills when I think about bringing such pain to a father and mother just for a moment of sensual pleasure. No wonder God gave such a commandment.

4. Adultery steals from society the influence of a healthy marriage.

The fabric of society is weakened anytime a family is lost to adultery. The nation is no stronger than the homes that make up the nation. Whatever destroys the home destroys the nation.

The church is weakened when a family is lost because of adultery. A weakened church means that a moral influence for good has been lost in the culture. Before you jump into an adulterous relationship you need to consider the negative side to what you are doing. You are playing the part of thief; you are stealing from everyone around you. Are you sure that you want to do it? Is it worth it? You are doing so much more than simply breaking an ancient rule for life that God gave to Israel more than three thousand years ago.

### III. ADULTERY DESTROYS THE SOUL.

In both the Old and New Testament warnings are given about the eternal cost of adultery. Let's review some of the statements we are given in Scripture as warning.

1. Adultery is a sin against the Lord.

One of the concerns of the father-teacher in Proverbs is that the son avoids the temptress, the one who would lead him into immorality. In one of the more graphic passages the son is told: “For a man’s ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines his path.” (Proverbs 5:21) You not only sin against all of those that we have already listed, and sin with the person involved, but most seriously of all you sin against God. He is a witness to all that you do and will hold you accountable for it. Adultery is a sin against God and thus is a sin against your own soul. You put your soul in jeopardy.

## 2. Adultery can lead to a lifestyle of bondage.

The father-teacher warns his son about this. Very few men or women will only commit adultery once. It becomes a lifestyle. “The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of sin hold him fast.” (Proverbs 5:22) I have a vivid memory of a long conversation that I had as a young pastor with a fellow church member. We were spending the evening beside the hospital bed of a dying friend. There was something about the serious circumstance that turned our conversation toward sober matters.

He shared with the tragic story of his life. He and his young wife were active leaders in their church in another part of this state. He was presented with an opportunity to commit adultery with a friend, and took it. He admitted to me that he never meant to hurt his wife, or to lose his family. However he said



to me with a broken heart, “D. L., after that first time there seemed to be another temptation every time I turned around. Before I knew what had happened, I had lost everything. It cost me my wife, my children, my position in the church, my job.” Solomon knew this—he may have been speaking to his sons out of experience in these wise words.

### 3. God has special judgment for the adulterer.

I want to make sure that you know what I say to you comes from the Word of God. Listen to a word from the New Testament: “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and the sexually immoral.” (Hebrews 13:4) How does the judgment come? You can be sure that God has more ways to judge you than you could ever imagine.

As I come to close of this study, I am concerned. I am concerned that someone might leave this service without hope. I want to close this word about the law of God by reminding you of the mercy of the Savior. You will remember the incident in the Gospel of John where they drug a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery into the presence of Jesus. They wanted him to pronounce judgment on her. Instead of pronouncing judgment on her, He bent over and began to write with his finger in the sand. No one

knows for sure what he wrote in the sand, but whatever it was, it scattered the crowd. He had said to them, “The one that is without sin let him cast the first stone.” No one cast a stone at her—especially not Jesus. Rather He forgave her and sent her home with an admonition to avoid this sin in the future. If you are stained with adultery, there is forgiveness available. Come to Jesus just like you are.