

Session 5

October 4, 2020

HONOR MARRIAGE

Exodus 20:14; 2 Samuel 11:1-5

“Do not commit adultery” (Ex. 20:14).

The God who created life is the same God who created the institution of marriage. Immediately following the Commandment to respect another’s life, is that of respecting this most basic of human relationships. Therefore, those who want to preserve their relationship with God must also preserve their relationship with their spouse. In 1 Corinthians, Paul reminds the church that sexual immorality is a sin against one’s self (6:18). But when that sin is adultery, the number of victims is doubled...at the very least.

To illustrate the ease with which even the most respected fall into this sin, we need look no further than to King David, a man after God’s own heart (see 1 Sam. 13:14). The classic pattern characterizing the slippery slope of sin stated in 1 John 2:16 is evident in this tragic event. All three “lusts” are present, albeit in a different order than presented by John.

The “boastful pride of life” (2 Sam. 11:1-2). The first two verses of the chapter set the stage for what would follow. Spring meant that winter rains had ceased and the ground dried. With new grass and firm pathways, armies left poised for conflict could once again engage their adversaries. David, who customarily led Israel’s forces, instead turned the reigns of leadership over to Joab, his able commander. The most telling phrase in verse 1, however, is the last: “But David remained in Jerusalem” (v. 1). Many a commentator has rightly pointed out this decision as the turning point in King David’s reign. As God’s chosen king over God’s chosen people, his *personal liberties* as king should not have taken priority over his *obligations* as king. But David is older now (certainly in his late 50s); his kingdom solidified under his rule, and he had plenty of able men to run things. He no doubt considered his position and his prosperity, and felt he deserved opportunity to relax and bask in the warmth of his success. While soldiers did his duties on the battlefield, he dozed in the comfort of his bed. While others ran the lowly kingdom business, he strolled the lofty roof of his palace (v. 2). For reflection: *Is the relative comfort of your current success, or the hum-drum routine of your daily life becoming fertile ground for worldly temptations? What can we do to protect ourselves from these same kinds of pitfalls?*

The “lust of the eyes” (vv. 2-3). Apparently, King David had wandering eyes to accompany his wandering feet. From the lofty perch of his palace, he could look down upon his capital city and his loyal subjects. Unaware of the prying eyes from above, Bathsheba tended the business of her bath. Few details are provided, and none that would impugn the virtue of the woman who caught his eye. Bathing was normally done from a basin in the privacy of a garden, courtyard, or bedroom. Bathsheba had every right and every expectation to bathe in private. Her only “sins” (thus far), were circumstantial. She happened to be in the view of the king...and she happened to be very beautiful. The wording of the messenger’s response in verse 3 (literally, “Is this not...?”) allows for the possibility that David might well have had an idea who she was, as does the proximity of her residence to the palace. Yet his move to find out betrayed his intention (see James 1:14-15). For reflection: *At what point could David have stopped along this path to sin? How is that done? Why didn’t he stop?*

The “lust of the flesh” (vv. 4 ff). The evil that was lurking in the king’s mind and enhanced by his eyes, was here fully conceived into sin. Having been swept away by the power of both David’s position and his own powers of persuasion, Bathsheba willingly consented to his advances and was now as guilty as he. The parenthetical phrase that she was done “purifying herself” may refer to the reason for her bathing earlier in the day, or to her intimate experience with the king, both of which were under sanction of Levitical law. But no ceremonial washing could absolve either the immediate guilt or the ongoing consequences of their adultery. For reflection: *Once the sin was committed, what should have been the proper response? Why do you think David took so long to confess it?*