

HOW TO TAKE A WIFE IN PURITY

10/9/2011

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8

INTRO: We are continuing our studies in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8, where I believe God spells out specifics as to how Christian Gentiles are to take a wife. Paul says that this is God's will, your sanctification, your holiness. It is so that they will abstain from fornication in taking a wife. God wills for that each of them should know how to acquire a wife in sanctification and honor. So, if God wills their sanctification, it then follows that they should know how to take a wife in sanctification, but he adds to that that they should do so in honor.

The contrast to that in the negative is that they do not take a wife in the way the Gentiles normally do it, and that is in passion of lust. I want to express my appreciation to so many of you who have shared with me your regrets of your own life, and your concern for your children. I have said a number of times in talking with many here, for those of us for whom the matter of taking a wife is in the past; let us forget those things that are past and reach forward to those things before us. And in reaching forward to those things before us, we seek to train our children to do better than we have and for that we must still remember the past.

Now this morning, we want to look first at the reasons we are to know how to acquire a wife in sanctification and honor. Then we want to look at the aim of God's will in this matter of taking a wife in sanctification and holiness and that those who reject God's will in this matter are not rejecting men but God.

Then I want to give you a five point purity commitment. I have put this into the bulletins. If you are 12 years old or older, and you want to commit yourself to purity, I invite you to put your name on that paper and tear off that tear off section and put it in my mailbox or in the offering box and the deacons can pass those on to me. I will make you a card to take home and pin up as a reminder. If you are under 12, I want to encourage you to talk to your mom or dad or both about it first, and then have one of them sign as well. They will know more fully if you are ready for a commitment like this.

Now this commitment is very serious. If you do not keep your word, then you will need to confess and deal with that in whatever way God requires in order for you to get free from a violated conscience. So, let me tell you a little story. Many years ago I worked for a man. We had a serious breakdown and I asked God for wisdom in the matter and promised I would tell this man about the Lord if God answered my prayer. God answered my prayer, and then not too much later I was asked to run a machine for this man a long way from home. I do not remember if I saw him after that but a long time later I remembered my promise to God. That is probably over 35 years ago. Later when I remembered, I could not locate him but always this weighed on my mind. And this summer I finally found a clue as to where he was and he was here in Alberta. By now he had had an accident and had fallen into drugs and had left his wife and children, who I understand are probably Christians now, and had married another woman. But he did not want people to know his phone number. Eventually I got an address I could send a letter to and they would pass it on to this man. I wrote this man exactly what had happened and then I shared the Gospel with him. I expect by this time he has long read the letter. Do not make a commitment unless you intend to keep it. This is very serious.

You will not understand the depth of your commitment but in a very short time you will meet the Cape Horn rollers on the tempestuous seas of love and then you will understand. And it is then that your commitment will become very difficult. But I am fully convinced you can do this. You can even ask someone to pray for you. If you trust some older person I would advise you to tell them that you have made this commitment and that you would like them to hold you accountable. And the rest I will leave to you and the Lord.

b. The reasons for acquiring a wife in this way

1) Because they are not to defraud their brother (6a)

So, we are in verse 6, but let us read verses 3-6 (read). Our text, as I see it, now goes on to tell us why God has chosen that men should take a wife in sanctification and honor. And the

reasons Paul gives are not because such sins are a great sin against God, though they are, but because such sins are a huge crime against man as well. First, he says it is for the reason that, and I quote, "...no one should take advantage of his brother in this matter..." The question commentators are troubled about here is what is meant by 'in this matter'. I have mentioned how some hold that this has to do with business dealings, but that is clearly against the context.

So John Gill comments like this: "This is commonly understood of transgressing the bounds of justice and equity between men and men; and of cheating and defrauding in trade and business, by increasing or lessening the value and prices of goods by the buyer and seller, by not keeping to the bargain, contract, covenant, or sample, by false weights and measures, and by taking the advantage of the weakness and ignorance of men; all which is aggravated by dealing thus with a brother; see #1Co 6:8 and this hint is thought the rather necessary, since Thessalonica was a place of great trade and business. But the matter, or business referred to, is not trade, but the subject of chastity or uncleanness the apostle is speaking of, both before and after; and the phrases used either design the act of adultery, coveting a brother's wife, and lying with her, and so a defrauding and wronging of him by defiling his bed; or rather sodomitical practices, an unnatural lust and desire in men after men, and copulation with them; for upebainein, rendered, "go beyond," answers to le ab, "to go upon," or "lie with," so often used in Jewish writings for

lying with women, men, and beasts, in an unlawful way."

Now Gill is certainly a lot closer to what Paul has in mind here, as I see it, than such commentators as Luther who refer it to business matters. But I take it that what the Apostle Paul is referring to here is a Christian taking a wife from a fellow Christian brother. And that in such cases, no one is to go beyond and defraud his brother in THE matter.

If Gill is right in his commentary that the words, 'take advantage of' or 'to go beyond' refers to physical violations, then such actions violate our brother. It goes without saying that it then is certainly a violation against God Himself as well.

So, in this matter of taking a wife, when and how do we violate our brother? I want to point out two areas here. First, all acts participated in while taking a wife that do not belong to two unmarried persons are a violation against the young ladie's parents parents. They are defrauded. The onus of guarding this relationship is here placed on the young man. Today, the stress in certain movements is placed on the dad protecting his daughters. I believe in that. That is because many young men are not taught how to take a wife. But this text, I think, would rather place the stress on the dads teaching their sons to take a wife in sanctification and honor, because the son is to know how to take a wife in sanctification and honor.

I had a note quoting from another pastor this week. It goes like this: "We need to teach our daughters to

distinguish between a man who flatters her, and a man who compliments her. A man who spends money on her, and a man who invests on her. A man who views her as property, and a man who views her properly. A man who lusts after her, and a man who loves her. A man who believes he's God's gift to women, and a man who remembers a woman was God's gift to man...And then teach our sons to be that kind of man." How about that for a good piece of advice.

So, for all young men here or listening to this message, you are the one I believe God will hold accountable for how you treat the young lady you will take as a wife or how you treat her when you are dating or courting her to see if she would be a life partner for you.

Now, I think, if you date for fun you have defrauded your brother! If you do not take full responsibility for the relationship as the young man, you have defrauded your brother. If you continue seeing a young lady and stringing her along when you know she is not a potential life partner, you have defrauded your brother. This young lady does not belong to you. I tell even an engaged young man, this young lady is not yours. She belongs to her parents. And then, if you do anything improper with your unmarried partner, you have defrauded your brother even more so.

Here is what I believe: Anything you do before marriage that excites those feelings that belong to the marriage relationship, is defrauding your brother. Chuck Missler says it will lead to fornication or to frustration. Think that through. And I believe, young men, when we, as men, do this

kind of thing before marriage, we have defrauded our brother and have multiplied our own temptations. Taking a wife in purity and doing such things is trying to bring your boat safely to shore when the greybeards or cape horn rollers are bashing against the rock cliffs. Your chance is about zero.

Then I want to add, you may be defrauding somebody else as well. When you become familiar with a young lady like this, and then later find this is not a compatible companion, or she makes that decision, now you have defrauded the man who will eventually marry her.

So, consider the word translated 'to take advantage of' or 'to defraud'. It is the word that we also translate *greed*, the desire to have more. But it can be used in the sense of taking advantage of. We take advantage of somebody else to get more of what we want. Now let me warn every young man here, that when you do that, God is watching and God is not pleased. The stories I have heard of how young men give young ladies alcohol and then take advantage of them, I believe, arouses the anger of Almighty God. And maybe you ask, "What gives you an idea like that?" Well, I get that idea from the next part of verse 6.

2) Because the Lord will avenge those who disobey these instructions (6b)

In the second part of verse 6, we find these words, "...because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified." Now Paul says that on this issue he has forewarned them and testified to them before. That is, some time earlier. Gill comments on this, "Forewarned not

by a former epistle, as if this was the second to them, and what follows the first, as Grotius thought; but they did this when they were in person with them, knowing that these abominable vices greatly prevailed in their city; therefore they bore their testimony against them, and exposed the evil of them, and warned them of the danger by them, so that they could not now plead ignorance." The subject that Paul brings to their attention in our passage is not new to them. He had warned them about it when he was there. The fact that he writes about it here again shows how concerned he was over this matter", end quote.

But, not only did he forewarn them. He testified to them about this matter. We get our word *martyr* from the word used here. It means to witness. You see, people died for witnessing to the truth. That is why we call those who died for the faith 'martyrs'. They were witnesses. But when Paul had forewarned them he had borne witness to the fact that God avenges such. What does this mean? Let me quote from the paper I wrote in 1986. Quote: "The second reason that a Christian must break with ungodly fashions of taking a wife is that God will avenge all such. This can be translated, "...all such things" (neuter) or, "...all such persons" (masculine). I fear to take it as a masculine because virtually every commentator takes it as neuter. But I feel it is masculine, and thus referring to persons and not practices. If this is correct we might paraphrase this passage as follows, "You Thessalonians, do not think for one moment you can get away with defrauding your brother (in this matter). Not even the heathen can get away with this. The matter of taking a

wife is a very serious matter, and God will avenge everyone who goes beyond and defrauds his brother. What is wrong with you that you dare disobey this, for we told you and fully testified to you that God will avenge such persons."

B. The Aim Of God's Will In This Matter (7)

1. Negatively (7a)

In verse 7 then, Paul goes on to show us the aim of God's will in the matter of taking a wife in purity. He spells it out first as negatively and that is that, and I quote, "God did not call us to uncleanness." You see, that which is clean in marriage, is vile and filthy outside of marriage because God has forbidden it. And God has forbidden it because it destroys godliness!

Now this uncleanness it speaks of is moral uncleanness. It is to be defiled morally. God has not called us to moral uncleanness. It is the devil that calls and invites to this. For God, the exact opposite is true. He has called us to moral purity, and thus is concerned that we know how to take a wife in purity.

Just this week I read a stat that only 76% of Evangelical Christians believe fornication is wrong and 80% commit this sin before marriage.

2. Positively (7b)

So, in our text, the positive is given as that God has called us to sanctification. That is holiness and we have talked a lot about that. The article that gave the stats I read a moment ago went on to say, "Even though most Christians believe abstinence is the right thing, something needs to change for believers to truly live out their faith and pursue holiness in every area of life (K-House eNews for October 04, 2011)."

C. The Rejection of God's Will In This Matter (8)

Now, when God made man, He made an incredible being. Every child conceived comes with a free will. No matter what the Calvinist says or how he mocks this, such is the case with man. God has not predestined anyone to hell! That is horrible thinking! God calls as many as He can get us to talk to and He wants all men to be saved. It is not His will that any perish. But in this incredible creation lies the potential to reject God's will. You and I both have that capacity. We have that capacity in this matter. And in this passage the Bible says that he who rejects the instructions given here, is not rejecting men, but God Himself. There we have the negative and the positive side of those who reject this teaching.

V. THE PURITY COMMITMENT

A. Advice For Parents

1. Live right in this area

Do not expect you can live one way when your children are not around but stress to them the importance of living right, and then have them come out right in the end. Live right yourself. Be careful what you watch and listen to, whether your children are around or not.

2. Keep your teaching age appropriate

Children should be allowed to be children. Children who learn things beyond where they are in maturity are robbed of a childhood. Do not inform them beyond where they are. There are many things young children do not need to know.

But for many of us, the danger may be teaching them at all. When it comes to our subject, many are not taught things they should know at the appropriate ages. If your children go to public school or spend much time among non-

churched children, you will have to teach them some things sooner than should be necessary. I spoke with one of our church parents and we were discussing a certain issue. And he said, "Oh, if they are in public school, by that age some of them have already lived it." Even if you send your children to Christian camps, you may have to teach them things before it would otherwise be necessary. If you do not safeguard your children with proper training on some matters in such situations, they will still learn, only it will often be in ungodliness. This is one of those areas where we would like to keep our heads in the sand. Pull them out and acknowledge danger where danger is real.

3. Give pointers

You can point your children in the right direction in many ways. First, live right yourself. And then, of course, teach them right as well. When you have family times, devotional times, when the opportunity arises give godly pointers. Always remain age appropriate.

No matter where you are, opportunities arise and it is time to teach. You may see some young people that are placing themselves in danger in matters of our subject. Then point it out to your children and encourage them how to stay away from such situations.

4. Guide your children

Now one of the most important things in the maintenance of purity is parental guidance when they reach point the first point of danger we mentioned at the outset. When they want to start seeing someone, give more guidance. Without parental guidance, the chances of purity are minimal.

I would say this, in all of life's training, seek to bring your children to a point where they resolve within themselves that they want

to remain pure. This will be one of the greatest things you can do. Live in such a way as will make them abhor impurity and long for a pure relationship themselves. Teach in such a way as to do the same.

B. For Young People

I have said many times that when it comes to training children, parents can use all the help they can get. It is helpful if all uncles and aunts and grandparents and friends and relatives are pulling in the right direction. When children look up to older relatives and those relatives live right, that is a tremendous help. Another great help is a godly church.

So, parental guidance is tremendously important in this matter of taking a wife in purity. If parents can train their child in such a way that a personal commitment to purity is made by the young person, this is one of the most powerful things that can happen. Unless one uses the betrothal system, even strong parental guidance does not solve all the purity problem, not even very carefully guarded courtships will safe guard young people enough if there is not a personal resolve to purity or if there is rebellion in the young person.

But now I want to give five principles that you, as a young person, could commit yourself to. I am not talking about a light commitment. This commitment is so strong, that you are willing to be held accountable to it by some older person.

Let me give you a few important principles that I think will guide you. If you write nothing else down in this message, write these points down.

1. PRAY for a wife/husband until you are married.

So, point number 1. How do you take a wife in sanctification and honor? Pray for a wife or husband until you are married. From the moment you form any interest in the opposite gender,

start praying for a life partner of God's choosing. Pray that God will already be at work in your future partner's heart and keep him/her for you.

2. UNDERSTAND clearly that you are fully responsible before God for any relationship you form and how you handle it.

Second, understand clearly that you are fully responsible before God for any relationship you form and how you handle it. If you understand this clearly, you will never form a relationship with someone unsaved. Take this matter as a divine matter. God has allowed you to spend some time with this person so you can get to know if this is a potential life partner. Integrity is a key word here. And always remember, God is the avenger of those who disobey His principles on this.

3. REFRAIN from anything and everything that militates against purity.

Third, refrain from anything and everything that militates against purity. Do this before and after you start seeing someone. Refrain from all music or videos, internet, places, times, situations, talk, joking, touching etc... that militate against your resolve to purity and causes you to be tempted to do wrong. As Gentiles, but Christians, we are not to take a wife in passion of lust.

4. INITIATE no relationship for fun.

Fourth, initiate no relationship for fun. Do not form a relationship with anyone of the opposite gender for recreation. Whatever method you will use in taking a wife, never form a relationship with a young lady just for the fun of it or to see whom you can be with. NEVER! Whatever method you will use, only form a relationship with one you consider a potential as a life partner! Remember, you are to take a life partner in holiness and honor.

5. TERMINATE honorably, any relationship you have formed as soon as you know this person is not for you.

Fifth, terminate honorably any relationship you have formed as soon as you know this person is not for you. Bring an end to the relationship in an honorable way. Say something like, "You have honored me with your presence. I do not take lightly that you have allowed me this opportunity. I sincerely appreciate this. I would not be fair to you if I continued our relationship." Remember, we are to take a wife in honor.

6. YIELD to no temptation to kiss.

Sixth, and last, commit yourself to never kiss someone you are dating or courting until you are married. I was tempted to modify this a little, but one little kiss can bring on the Cape Horn Rollers. The safest way is total abstinence.

CONCL: And so we bring these few message to a close. How can a Gentile take a wife in purity? Is it the method? Well, that will certainly help. But if you will commit to taking a wife or becoming a wife in sanctification and in honor, you will take a wife in purity. And I have given you five points to commit to that will help you do this in sanctification and honor.

Now, for those young people who will commit themselves to purity by signing the form and turning it in, let me advise you to one thing. When a young lady accepts a date or agrees for you to court her, or when a young man calls and you wish to accept the request to a date or to court, tell them right up front of your commitment to purity and allow them to decide knowing your commitment. Be ready for this before you call or before the call comes. And God bless you. You do understand, there is no obligation to make this commitment. Be sure before you do so.