

The Seventh Commandment: Adultery

A Problem of Faithlessness

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Exodus 20:14 You shall not commit adultery.

Very simply and pointedly we are commanded: "You shall not commit adultery."

In the previous sermon in this Ten Commandments series, we saw a small wedge of a statistical picture of how greatly the breaking of just one commandment—in this case it was the sixth commandment—impacts mankind. The conclusion from that is clear: that mankind must bear the weighty burden of the fruit of a major problem.

Today's sermon reveals little similar regarding breaking the seventh commandment. There is absolutely no way the figures can be compiled as to how many times adultery is committed. This is a sin that is done in secret and rarely creates major headlines. But nonetheless, it is a major, major sin and creates personal problems in its wake.

Within the scope of the spirit of the seventh commandment are numerous other sexual sins, like pornography, fornication, homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality, and incest, and all of the creepy, lecherous, psychologically destructive sexual attacks against weak and innocent children.

The figures for these sins, added to adultery, must be enormous beyond comprehension. In addition, figures cannot be compiled as to how many divorces proceed as the fruit of these sins, but at least it is partly due to adultery and those other sins. We are not going to delve into them deeply because divorce is caused by more than just sexual sin. We will be content with knowing that we are looking into a seething snake pit of evil, deliberately promoted by the twisted mind of Satan.

I am sure that everyone who drives on freeways notices how everyone gawks at an accident. Someone could be doing nothing more exciting than standing beside his car because he has a minor breakdown; however, even that activity creates a gaper's block because we just cannot seem to drive by without slowing down and looking.

In book stores, the top social issues are clearly seen by observing where the crowds of people are lined up looking for the latest revelation on how to solve certain problems. Magazines contain articles every month from a different doctor-so-and-so, giving his solution to these problems. He is essentially saying, "Trust me. I'm an expert."

For the past thirty or forty years, marriage, dieting, sex, and substance abuse have been the clear headline-grabbing leaders, sometimes more one than the other. But I think the clear overall leader over the long haul has been the attention-grabbing sex and marriage linked problems.

Year after year—at least in the United States—sex and marriage are discussed in public print with undiminished and God-ignoring confusion and increased pessimism. Calamity, like on the freeway, always attracts attention, and in the United States marriage is in a state of calamity. So consistent is the calamity that the calamity is now pretty much accepted as normal. Serious cultural observers are now considering, as a possibility, that we are witnessing the end of marriage as it has been practiced in Western cultures as the foundation of our culture. These forecasts are being accelerated by the rush to merely live together, and to legalize homosexual and lesbian unions.

In the late 1960s the divorce rate was under 40%. By 1975 it had climbed to almost 50%. That is only six, seven, or eight years from the late '60s, but it was beginning to climb rapidly. By 1978 it was at 51%, and in 1988 it had gone back to 49%. But in San Mateo County in Southern California, the divorce rate was 70% in the late '80s. Nevada's divorce requirements are so liberal that its rate is typically much higher than the national average.

However, today's approximately 60% divorce rate is skewed by the fact that so many couples are simply living together without any legal transactions

taking place, and thus there are no public records made of when they moved in together or whenever they split. It is just happening. There is one indicator that helps us to grasp how big it is. So large is it that 40% of all births in the United States are outside of wedlock!

It used to be that the average divorcing couple married, and then the split began about year seven. In fact, it was called "the Seven-Year Itch." The itch was when they decided that they were going to part what they had put together seven years before that. But after the '60s were over, that figure "7" at times was as low as "4." The couples were splitting after four years of marriage, but it has gone back up a little bit from that. All the time that these fluctuations were occurring up and down, we were being bombarded with information that sexual incompatibility was the all-important factor regarding divorce.

With the increase of general public sexual knowledge, and the increase of our general public mobility (more automobiles, etc.), and with an ever-increasing number of women joining the workforce, so has the opportunity increased to be promiscuous and experiment around, and it just adds to the confusion. With it so has the curse of broken homes increased, and the increase of an unstable society.

Sexual incompatibility is not *the* cause. It is *a* cause, but it is not *the* cause of divorce. Adultery and sexual incompatibility are but one facet of a far deeper and broader national sin. This national sin is actually shown many times in Scripture. Adultery is an outgrowth of this national sin.

We are going to turn to Amos 1, and we are going to look at a contrast God shows us there. The book of Amos was written to the ten northern tribes. I am just going to take some verses where the same basic format is shown for different nations that were extant at the time Israel was receiving this message from Amos.

Amos 1:3 Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they have threshed Gilead with implements of iron."

That statement "For three transgressions of Damascus, and for four," is simply a rhetorical device Amos uses. It is his way of saying that the accused—in this case it is Damascus—is guilty of an incalculable number of offenses. We might say it this way: "many, many, many times," but this was a Hebraism, and anybody hearing it at that time would know he was talking about a high number of sins. That is the sins of Damascus (the Syrians in this case) and they showed brutality against Gilead. Gilead was an area of northern Israel in which the half-tribe of Manasseh lived, as well as the tribes of Reuben and Gad. At some time the Syrians invaded there, and they were vicious to the *n*th degree. God did not forget.

Amos 1:6 Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Gaza [the Philistines], and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they took captive the whole captivity, to deliver them up to Edom."

The place there was somewhere near Gaza. The Philistines invaded and they captured a whole area of people and just delivered the whole population into slavery. God did not forget that either.

Amos 1:9 Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Tyre, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they delivered up the whole captivity to Edom, and did not remember the covenant of brotherhood."

Do you know what He is referring to there? In the days of David and in the days of Solomon, both of those kings of Israel made an agreement with Hiram, the king of Tyre, and it was almost like, you would say, a handshake deal. They were like brothers. "You said it." "This is what we are going to do." "We are in this together." Now the Tyrians forgot about that, and they did not treat the Israelites like brothers. They tore them up, and just like the Philistines, they delivered the whole population, in some sort of a battle or whatever, into the hand of Edom.

Do you know who Edom was? Esau. And you know who Esau was—Jacob's brother. Do you know who they are today? A large number of them are Arabs, and they fed the burning pride of the Arabs.

Amos 1:11 Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because he pursued his brother [Jacob] with the sword, and cast off all pity; his anger tore perpetually, and he kept his wrath for ever."

He never forgave his brother. He burned hot against him all the time. He was jealous of what Jacob had and it ate away at his innards, and when they got into a battle they were vicious. Does that remind you of how those people are today? Yes, it does.

Amos 1:13 Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they ripped open the women with child in Gilead, that they might enlarge their territory."

Do you know who the children of Ammon are? These people are also relatives of the Israelites. They are the children of Lot, Abraham's nephew.

Amos 2:1 Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Moab, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because he burned the bones of the king of Edom to lime."

In this case it was not done against the Israelites, but still, God did not forget what they did.

We are going to look at chapter 2, verse 4, and now the Israelites are going to be addressed. I want you to notice the contrast between what He says to those Gentile nations as compared to what He says to the Israelitish nation.

Amos 2:4 Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment, because they have despised the law of the LORD, and have not kept His commandments, their lies lead them astray, lies which their fathers have followed."

These are different accusations altogether.

Now let us look at verse 6, at the judgment on Israel, the ten northern tribes. I want you to think of this in relation to the United States of America.

Amos 2:6-8 Thus says the LORD; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of shoes; that pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor, and turn aside the way of the meek: and a man and his father will go in unto the same maid, to profane my holy name: And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge by every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned in the house of their god.

This is quite a contrast between the Gentile nations and the accusations against them and the accusations against the Israelitish people. The Gentiles are vicious. They are guilty of gross, vicious cruelties in warfare. In sharp contrast, Israel's sins largely involve national and personal deceit and faithlessness in social and economic cultural circumstances.

This is not to say that other nations do not have some level of these same characteristics, nor is it to say we have no vicious streak in us. It is to say that we have less excuse and are therefore held more accountable than any other people because God has given us what He has not given the others: His Word—and we should know better.

We are going to see that this sin will begin to focus in on one area. There is one book that is devoted it seems to the dominant theme of Israel's problem. Do you know what that theme is? It is *faithlessness*. We cannot be trusted to keep our word. We are sneaky, deceitful people, lying to one another in all kinds of situations. We always have another reason up our sleeve in order for gain to be made by us at somebody else's expense.

Is that the way God is? Is He not open and upright, and forthright? He says what He is. He says what He is going to do, and He follows through faithfully on what He says. The Israelitish people are so untrustworthy. They cannot keep a covenant. They cannot keep their word. They are faithless to Him, and their faithlessness to Him expands out into our general population as well.

Turn now to Hosea 1. This is a book that is in a sense devoted to the national sins of the Israelitish people.

Hosea 1:2 The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto you a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land has committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD.

Hosea is especially creative in his use of metaphors to describe Israel's and God's relationship. There are two dominant ones, and both are mentioned in this verse. The primary one is that Israel is a faithless wife. The secondary one is Israel as a rebelling child, rebelling against God's law.

Understand that the word "whoredom" means "sexually wanton"—meaning "really loose." It is sometimes translated as "harlotry." Israel is just like a street-walker, out there selling her wares. She just goes from one man to another. They call him a "John." She goes from one John to another. This is the way God is describing Israel's relationship with Him. The bottom line is "faithlessness." It is so great. These words—sexually wanton or whoredom, and harlotry—become *the* symbol or type of idolatry. We will see the connection in just a bit.

Hosea uses two dominant family-relationship themes. In the first, God is seen as a faithful Husband—the victim of His wife's faithlessness. The second, God is seen as a long-suffering parent. It is the focus of the children's rebellion—the children of the couple, Israel and God. In each case though, Israel is faithless in carrying out its responsibility, and God names that faithlessness adultery and harlotry, and it was occasioned by Israel's departing from duty agreed upon in a contract called the Old Covenant.

Hosea 2:2-8 Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts; lest I strip her naked, and set her as in the day that she was born, and make her as a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst. And I will not have mercy upon her children; for they be the children of whoredoms. For their mother has played the harlot: she that conceived them has done shamefully: for she

said, I will go after my lovers, that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink. Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and make a wall, that she shall not find her paths. [In a sense signifying being put into a prison of trouble she cannot get out of.] And she shall follow after her lovers, but she shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, but shall not find them: then shall she say, I will go and return to my first husband; for then was it better with me than now. For she did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil, and multiplied her silver and gold, which they prepared for Baal.

In this context it is very clear that Israel is seen in two ways: (1) as a faithless wife and (2) as an irresponsible mother with rebellious children. She is so faithless she chases after her lovers. What is created in the whole nation is a spirit of harlotry, which is a pretty intense attitude of faithlessness that has many ramifications and results. This spirit of harlotry is like an invisible current of influence that gathers people into it because it is a way of life that all actually desire to follow. They think it is fun. They think it is good.

Let us reframe this a bit. In other words, this deceit (Israel's national sin and its resulting infidelity) is not confined to the God/Israel covenant in marriage, but rather we are going to see it has spread out into the relationships of the citizens of the Israelitish people, and they think it is a right, proper, and good way of life.

Jump now to chapter 4 and we will see some of the results of this spirit of harlotry.

Hosea 4:1-2 Hear the word of the LORD, you children of Israel: for the LORD has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, [Now why?] because there is no truth, [How can you have truth when deceit is driving the people?] nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood touches blood.

It is like an endless chain of murder, because the blood of one touches the blood of the next one, and touches the blood of the next one, and touches the blood of the next one.

Let us examine these for just a little bit. He says that there is no truth. In that statement He is talking *His* truth. It does not mean that everybody is lying all the time, but the truth is missing from the life of the people. How many people do you know who are really following and living by the Bible?

It is very interesting that very many people in the United States look upon the Bible as *the only holy book*. They do not think that the Koran is holy, but the Bible, they say, *is* holy, but what do they know is *in* that book? Even though they may know parts of it, do they believe it enough to put in to practice in their life? That is why God says there is no truth. We could add a little bit to that. There is no truth *being lived*, even though there is some awareness of God.

The major truth that is lost is that regarding God's Word and His relationship with Israel, and Israel's relationship with Him, but this sin extends out beyond that. By the time we reach the condition in chapter 4, there is no longer a reliable basis for business and its relationship. There are no solid standards. People are consistently untrustworthy in all aspects of life, and reliability is uncertain. Who can be trusted? That is what God is saying. Let me give you just a little bit of an example.

We are practically being beaten over the head with news reports. Who is telling the truth about the economy? Whom can you believe? Just think about that. It is pretty hard to know, even though we know some Scripture, and we believe Scripture. Is there really a conspiracy going on? Are there people who are dragging the entire nation toward a global union? News reports do not all back it up, do they? It has gotten to the place where, let us say, somebody like Ben Bernanke (who is chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank), would come along and he would say, "We need more laws so that we can rescue this country from its economic problems." We would begin thinking, "Who's he kidding?" If they get those laws passed, then *they* will have more power than ever to control our lives and the economy, and we become helpless. That is what God is talking about. Whom can you trust?

Things have been whipped in the United States so that there is distrust all around because we have lived with it practically our whole life, and what we see is all kinds of self-interest going on. It is really interesting: God says

"this is going to be the result of the deceit that we use in dealing with Me," because it is not confined to deceit in relating to Him, but it begins to scatter out into the whole country in every avenue and in every aspect.

He goes further. He says that there is no mercy, in addition to that. The word here is *chesed*, translated "mercy," and it has the sense of "steadfast love" in this kind of a context rather than a single act of kindness in which one person helps another. That is not what is being talked about. He is talking about there being a real love of the nation, a real love of the community that you live in, love of your neighbor so that you will not do anything ever to be unfaithful to him, and unfaithful to your responsibility.

So what has developed in the United States of America? We have been put into the position where we are always protecting ourselves. What does that say about what we think our neighbor might do to us? We think he is out to get us, that he is out to rob us. I do not mean really your next door neighbor. I am talking about a situation in which fear is driving the country, and that is the way it is. Instead of seeing steadfast love in the country and in the people, we see the people adopting a protectionist attitude, and what does that do? It separates us, and we are on the defensive all the time.

So what is He saying here? He is saying that deceit eventually produces an atmosphere of defensiveness, and at best we have a detached coolness toward one another. Americans are a people who blow hot and cold. When we are hot, we are hot, but we cannot seem to sustain it because our eye begins to rove to some new interest that excites us, and we find ourselves as a people in which satisfaction does not last very long in us.

Similar indications of this are all over the place. Advertisers know that they have to change scenes even in ads every so many seconds. With children's programs, the advertising scenes change every seven seconds in order to hold the child's interest. With adults, in the evening hours, the scene may last a little bit longer. They purposely make them change because that way they can hold our attention. That is kind of what He is talking about here. We are a people who blow hot and cold, and satisfaction does not last very long.

In addition to that, He says there is no knowledge of God. This knowledge has two possible elements to it. In the first is a general knowledge *about*

God. This is very basic. That is, of His existence, word, and way. As important as that is, the second aspect is even more so in terms of affecting relationship.

The second way is the *acknowledgment* of God. That is what is missing. People do have a knowledge of God's existence. An overwhelming percentage of people in the United States believe there is a God, but is there any corresponding acknowledgment of God in the way that they conduct their lives? That is what God is talking about. Is it not in Psalm 10 where David wrote about people, saying "God is not in all of their thoughts"? As a people we know that God exists, but partly due to this attitude of deceit we have exercised before God we are detached from Him, and that is shown in that we do not acknowledge Him in our life. This indicates that we are a people without commitment. There is no sturdy, consistent loyalty to a way of life in which God is the focus.

Jesus said in John 17:3 that eternal life is to know God, and so the context here in Hosea 4 seems to demand that the second—there is no acknowledgement of God—is what is intended. We know from Old Testament history that the Israelites had a general knowledge of God, but also from the Old Testament prophets we know that they did not seek Him, and they did not really know Him. This at best produces a distant relationship.

We are going to look at verse 2 once again. Remember, we are talking about Israel's major national sin—the one that seems to lead to all the other sins.

Hosea 4:2 By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood touches blood.

Here this word "adultery" again is not the normal word for adultery. This is the word that means "sexually wanton." It is the Hebrew word *zanah*, transliterated "zawnaw," and it means "sexually wanton." It means something that is done repeatedly as a way of life, and thus ultimately is understood as indicating idolatry.

We are going to drop down to verse 11. This adds an interesting note.

Hosea 4:11 Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart.

Remember this. It is really interesting. "Whoredom takes away the heart." What is the heart in biblical symbolism? It is the center of our thinking. It is what drives what we do. It motivates us to go in certain directions. "Out of the heart proceeds evil thoughts, murders," and on and on. "Whoredom [harlotry, idolatry] takes away the heart."

Hosea 4:12-14 My people ask counsel at their stocks [indicating their idols], and their staff declares unto them: for the spirit of whoredoms [the "spirit of harlotry"—that current of influence that is based in deceit and produces idolatry.] has caused them to err, and they have gone a whoring from under their God. They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains [the high places], and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good: therefore your daughters shall commit whoredom, and your spouses shall commit adultery. I will not punish your daughters when they commit whoredom, nor your spouses when they commit adultery: for themselves are separated with whores, and they sacrifice with harlots: therefore the people that does not understand shall fall.

I kind of emphasized the word "whoredom" in verse 11 and I want to attach it to the word "wine" and "new wine" because God put them together purposely. The "spirit of harlotry" is addictive just like wine and new wine are addictive. The spirit of harlotry—the spirit of deceit that produces idolatry—becomes addictive, and it becomes a way of life. It enslaves the heart. Is that not what wine and new wine do? Wine and new wine (alcohol) become addictive, and the alcohol becomes the master and the person becomes a slave.

God is saying that this spirit of harlotry—this faithlessness, this deceit by which we deal with Him and with each other—is addictive. We become its slave, and it tells *us* what to do. So what does it do? It bends the heart to obeying its desires, and in the process destroys discretion and understanding.

This is a horrible sin, brethren, and I am going through this in detail so that you will understand what produces adultery in a marriage. It is deceit. It is

lying to your spouse. It is being irresponsible. It is not being faithful to vows. Is not adultery done in secret? It is one of those sins that is almost always done in secret. Why is it done in secret? Because people want to *hide* their deceit. Somewhere in them is an understanding that what they are doing is wrong, and so they seek to hide it. But understand it is deceit that is driving it. This is the way we have dealt with God from the very beginning.

Israel gave its word on Mount Sinai, and in a very short time was rebelling against the Creator. I mean within days! Are you happy to *know* this is part of *our character*? I think the answer should be "Yes" so that we can expunge it from our character because it separates us from God. It enslaves the heart, and so that deceit tells the heart to obey its desire, and in the process destroys discretion and understanding.

That last phrase I used—"discretion and understanding"—is kind of interesting because both Psalm 19, and interestingly Psalm 119, tell us that through keeping God's commandments one *receives* understanding. Break them—understanding and wisdom are destroyed. Keep them—understanding and wisdom are built.

Hosea 7:1 When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood [lying, deceit]; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoils without.

That is interesting when you stop to think on it, because God is showing a result here. What is happening to the world, to the United States of America? People are coming in and stealing it away from within and from without. We are having to live through this period of punishment from God as He brings this country down economically.

Hosea 7:2-4 And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness [just like He made sure in the first chapter how He remembered the wickedness of the Gentile nations, He remembers Israel's deceit in dealing with Him.]: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face. They make

the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.
They are all adulterers, as an oven heated by the baker, who ceases
from raising after he has kneaded the dough, until it be leavened.

This is really kind of interesting here. In this verse, when He uses the term "adultery," He is using the *normal* word for adultery. It is not the *zanah* word. He uses the normal word for adultery, and thus He gives us some insight into one of the ways that the spirit of harlotry—the spirit of faithlessness—was carried into the Israelitish culture.

They do not consider. How can you be wise if you do not consider the end of choices? What does that indicate? When we make these choices to commit, let us say, adultery with somebody other than our spouse, does that not indicate that this is saying something about us? Is this not saying that we want the thrill, that we want to please the self rather than please God, or please our wife, or our husband?

We are looking for the pleasure of the moment rather than the pleasure of disciplining ourselves and doing what is right. God says that the root of this is the fact that our harlotry is driving the heart and it has enslaved us to sin. We are living for the self only. That is what He is getting at here.

It is interesting that He used the normal word for adultery. Because we do not consider, it begins to exercise its sinfulness and produces things within the nation. Let me get more specific. It begins producing things like syphilis, gonorrhea, herpes, chlamydia, AIDS, broken homes, rebellious children, children being raised by single parent. How many children are not even sure who their parents are? It is tearing the country apart.

The term "king" is used here in verse 3. This is a term that is also used to indicate not only *the* king, but simply used in a general way to indicate leaders in business, in education, and in government as well. God is indicating those whose own evil ends are producing this cesspool of sin. He is describing a whole society that is "enveloped in benefiting from the sin." Think about gonorrhea. Is that a benefit? There are people who are benefiting from that. How about the pharmaceutical companies?

How much of a doctor's practice is now involved in dealing with just the product of illicit sexual relations? Believe it or not, there are people who are seemingly, at least economically, profiting from this cesspool of sin. Those are the kings—the leaders—that He is talking about here, and so the list includes doctors, lawyers, hospitals, pharmaceutical houses, pornographers, booksellers, movies, and on and on it goes. This is quite an awful lot of fruit that is coming from deceit—faithlessness.

Turn to Jeremiah 5:7-9. In my Bible this is the beginning of a new paragraph, and the title of this paragraph is "Adultery." Listen to what God says.

Jeremiah 5:7-9 How shall I pardon you for this? Your children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. They were as fed horses in the morning: every one neighed after his neighbor's wife. Shall I not visit for these things? says the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

That is a lament from God. I think that we could go from prophet to prophet and find similar statements. Brethren, Israel has trouble being faithful to God, or to anything: God, mate, country, employer, contracts. Our national mind seems to be like quicksilver, and as a people we always seem to be trying to get the best for ourselves, and be willing to bend in any direction to get *our* pleasure. We really work at it. When one thinks of our father Jacob, one can almost believe that this characteristic is in the genes. It is not, though. The characteristic is absorbed by yielding to a culture saturated with the spirit of harlotry.

I do not know whether you have ever heard of Sidney J. Harris. He is dead, but he was a syndicated columnist whose writings usually touched on moral things—things that were going on in society that he saw were either good or bad, or whatever. He was sort of like a George Will in his day and age. I cut this out of the paper in 1982. There is a lot of wisdom in what he wrote here. Sidney Harris said the following:

Most virtues exist on a sliding scale all the way from excellence to ineptitude, and most of us are tolerably somewhere in the middle without too much damage to ourselves or others. But there is one virtue that is all or nothing, and that is reliability. You are either reliable, or you are not. It doesn't matter how nearly or how often you are reliable. If you are not, and if not, it doesn't matter how nearly often you are reliable.

If I were an employer of any sort, I would be willing to put up with many kinds of personal or professional deficiency, but never this one. A person who is not dependable is bound to fail you and himself as well at precisely the wrong time.

It reminds me of the debonair Viennese gentleman, who, when asked, "Have you been faithful to your wife?" he replied, "Frequently." It is plain that a man who is frequently faithful is not faithful at all. He might as well never be. Reliability is one of the hardest character traits to identify by testing or screening, or anything except personal acquaintance. Some people are rocks by nature or training, while others are paper mache, painted to resemble rocks who crumble when sudden pressure is applied by circumstances.

Now if you are married to someone who cannot be depended upon to pull his or her own weight, it hardly matters what other admirable traits your mate may possess, because you can never know when they will let you down. It is the same to being married to an alcoholic [Remember how God made the connection between alcoholism and deceit.] who is only there part of the time, and usually not when most needed. Consistency is what is required in the people we associate with. [Is that not what God wants? He wants us to be consistently submissive to Him.]

With a confident knowledge of what we can rightfully expect of them, barring sudden illness or catastrophe beyond anyone's control, otherwise there is no real relationship. [Let that sink in. Can God have a relationship with people He cannot trust? That is what He is complaining about.] There is no real relationship, but

only a shifting accommodation to the winds of caprice and self-indulgence.

It is easy to feel affections for another. What is harder to translate is this feeling into acts—daily acts that demonstrate that vastness of purpose in a domestic routine that may not be as dramatic as some heroic rescue, but that keeps the craft afloat no matter which way the winds of happenstance blow. The deep and most important virtues are often the duller ones. They don't win any medals and they get no glory, but they are the glue that binds society together and makes it work now and always.

Do you understand that being dependable, reliable, faithful, and consistent in responsibility *is love*? That is what love consists of—always being there regardless of the circumstance. Did Israel ever live for God? How often have we let Him down as a people, as a nation, as an individual? We all do it. God is willing to forgive, but brethren, we have to work, grow, and overcome to be what God is.

Turn to Deuteronomy 7. This is a great chapter. Notice how God describes Himself.

Deuteronomy 7:9 Know therefore that the LORD your God, he is God, the *faithful* God, which keeps covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments [He is faithful] to a thousand generations.

This is the kind of response that God is looking for in us. He of course knows, and He understands that we are not going to be perfect, but as we move in that direction toward perfection it is going to be faithfulness that is going to mark us out as different from other people. God says, "I change not." He is always the same yesterday, today, and forever, and He will never turn from what He is. He backs up His Word, and He loves us to the *n*th degree, and He wants us to be faithful like He is.

When I originally put this sermon together back in the 1970s, I updated it to the 1980s, and this is one of the quotes I got from *Woman's Day* magazine,

July 28, 1978. It is from an article they had in that issue regarding marriage, and especially a husband's attitude in marriage. The article revealed that 50% to 70% of all American men commit adultery at least once. In the late 60s and early 70s the Hite Report said that it was 66%, more precise. I do not know whether either one is absolutely correct, but what that *Woman's Day* article brought out was this: Of a 100% of the men who were interviewed for that article, 67% of all husbands responded that "adultery is always wrong."

Now clearly, with the statistics on the other side, that somewhere around 70% eventually commit adultery, and yet they believe that it is always wrong, somebody is confused. Do you know what they concluded? They concluded that of all of these men who reported that it is always wrong, every single one of them was probably an opportunist. If the opportunity presented itself, they were irresponsible enough, faithless enough, to take advantage of it regardless of whether or not they thought it was wrong.

You see, we are coming around to what we said a little bit earlier, that this deceit drives us to be so self-centered. And so the opportunity presents itself. Instead of doing what Joseph did, who *ran away* from Potiphar's wife, 70% of the men would say, "Oh, you're interested in me? Let's get it on." We are a self-seeking, opportunistic people who are willing to bend on principles, standards, and traditions or beliefs if we can see advantage for the self.

Here are the things that men have to say about why they *do not* commit adultery. In other words, these are the people who are not quite so opportunistic and these are the reasons why they do not take advantage of the opportunity even when it is presented to them.

Number 1 is the fear of being caught. And so adultery is avoided, not because it is a sin, but simply to avoid the pain of the possibility of losing respect socially or financially. What does that mean? It means that people fear scandal more than they fear sin, because, in their heart-of hearts, they want to be well-thought of.

Number 2 is the inability to deal with guilt and deception. This is interesting that it is not the adultery and the evil it produces, but having to bear something personally that cannot any longer be hidden. That is the burden.

Number 3 is the lack of opportunity. This is what men admitted. They avoid it because of the lack of opportunity. That is very interesting. The opportunity never arises usually because the man's wife or some other authority figure is always living in the background; but he is open to it. (Number 4 gets a little bit better.)

Number 4 is the belief that husbands should be faithful. This is good, but I hasten to add here that this is not necessarily because of belief in God. It can just as easily be conformity to social pressure that is the real fear. (Number 5 is better still.)

Number 5 is the personal desire to be faithful. This is a much stronger one than number 4, but you will notice that there is not one mention of God in the five reasons. This could be because it is not fashionable to talk about God. It could also be because God is not in all of their thoughts, and what He thinks is not to be considered.

Regardless of how successfully a man or a woman might consider they were in getting away with it in their adventure into sin, there are serious things that can be learned from it. I will refer you here to Jacob's experience. Turn with me to an interesting verse, Numbers 32:23. One of the things that is so interesting about what is said here is the context in which it is said. This is one that should be in your memory.

Numbers 32:23 But if you will not do so, behold, you have sinned against the LORD: and be sure your sin will find you out.

God sees all. I said to you very early in the sermon when we were in the book of Amos that God watched all these things going on in the earth, and it was in His memory. He did not forget the way those Gentiles treated the Israelitish people, and He marked it against them, and in His own way He was going to bring judgment to pass upon them. By the same token, He is the same One that in Hebrews 4:12 says we have to deal with. God promises that our sins will find *us* out.

Now I mentioned to you the context. Do you know what the context is here? The context involved the tribe of Reuben, the tribe of Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. It was just before they were going to go across the Jordan

River and go into the area of the Promised Land. These three nations came to Moses and said to him, "We would like this land to be our inheritance."

Moses received the word from God. "Okay. But they have to be faithful to their promise that they will not put down roots there until the whole land is conquered and all is in the hands of the Israelitish people. If you don't keep your word, Reuben, if you don't keep your word, Gad, and if you, the half-tribe of Manasseh don't keep your word, I won't forget. I am going to hold it against you because you didn't take part with your brethren. You broke your word."

Do you know what happened? They kept their word. Though the land was now theirs, they did not put down roots even though their wives and children remained behind. Their fighting force went with the rest of the Israelite tribes and fought in the wars to secure the land. They kept their word, and so God had no reason to punish them. We have to understand that this same thing applies to us.

God is not holding this over our heads like it is a big anvil weight, but we always have to deal with the facts, that God sees all, God knows all. He is concerned about us. He is building in us the kind of character that will make us faithful in the way that He is faithful, that we will no longer be deceitful, always looking out for ourselves and trying to manipulate everything to our end, and that we will use whatever practice we feel is necessary to bring our end to pass. If sacrificing is necessary, we will do that. If resisting adultery or fornication is necessary, we will resist it, and be faithful to Him and to others who are a part of this, because that is the way He is.

Who is it who is talking here? It is Jesus Christ, our Lord, and it is in His image that we are being created. He wants us to be faithful to our word in the same manner as He is faithful to His Word. It is one outstanding characteristic of the people of God. *God is faithful.*

This is why there is so much adultery and fornication and all of these other sins in this nation. We are a faithless people. We have been given the Word of God. We have been given the opportunity to have a relationship with Him, and all we have to do to keep the relationship going is to be faithful to the covenant that we have made with Him. That is hard enough in itself, but

there is an awesome reason that ought to motivate and drive us to do what is necessary, and that reason is to be like Him, as He is faithful.

I think that is about as far as I can take this in the time I have, but I hope that from it you have learned what is at the root of America's and the rest of the Israelitish nations' sex problems. It is faithlessness. It is deceit. It is twisting every circumstance that we can do it in to get for the self, and at the forefront of these things is our horrible sexual achievements (if I can put it that way) before God.