

Sermon on The Prohibited Degrees

by

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LEVITICUS 18-6.

None of you shall approach to any that are near of kin to him—ARV.

A law has been passed quite recently in Great Britain permitting a man to marry his deceased wife's sister. Such a marriage has never before been legal in that kingdom. It is understood that this law does not interfere with the freedom of the Church and that its ministers are under no obligation to marry such parties nor are they required to administer the sacraments to them. The State is to do as it pleases and the Church as it pleases in the matter. Yet the Archbishops and the Bishops in the House of Lords vehemently opposed the passage of the law and voted unanimously against it. They denounced such marriages as wicked and maintained that the State had no more right to license such wickedness than to license any other wickedness such as stealing or perjury.

This conduct of this Bishops has called out an immense amount of newspaper comment in our country and in our State. Some of it of course has been fair and reasonable. But some has exhibited dense ignorance and would lead one to suppose that the authors had never looked into the Bible; and besides that have been wanting in historical knowledge, Christian charity and common sense. The general principle asserted by these writers is that there is no reason to prevent man from marrying any one he chooses who is not blood kin to him. To this I reply that both the law of nature and the will of God prohibit some marriages when the parties are related only by marriage. That is certain degrees not only of consanguinity but of affinity are by God's law bars to a marriage, and a marriage made in defiance of them is none in His sight.

The laws of Moses are of three kinds, civil, ceremonial and moral. It is agreed among all Christians that the civil and ceremonial laws do not bind Christians but the moral laws do.

Among the civil laws which have no binding force on us, was the law, that the punishment of him who stole a sheep, was, if the identical sheep was restored, to give also another of equal value; but if he stole and sold a live sheep he was to restore four fold. The man who stole and sold a live ox was to restore five fold. The man and the woman who married in defiance of some of the prohibitions were to be put to death, in another case they were to be burnt with fire. We are under no obligation to inflict these punishments but we substitute for them those provided by the law of the land. Among ceremonies that have passed away are those requiring the observance of the feasts of the new moon, and of abstaining from certain foods and drinks. But the moral laws "thou shalt not kill," "thou shalt not steal" and all others never lose their binding force.

It is sometimes difficult to discern the moral laws from the others but there are three principal tests. If disobedience to the law is anywhere in the Old Testament denounced as wickedness or as an abomination, then it is a moral law. If the same disobedience is denounced in the New Testament, then it was moral law. If the heathen people are denounced for not observing it then it is a moral law, and such a moral law as might have been known by the light of nature.

The prohibitions in this 18th chapter of Leviticus stand all three of these tests. In this part of that book each chapter begins with the words "And Jehovah spake unto Moses saying." The chapter is devoted to a single subject and the whole of it either is or is not moral law. This 18th chapter sets out by saying: "After the doings of the land of Egypt wherein ye dwelt ye shall do; and after the doings of the land of Canaan whither I bring you, ye shall not do." After all the specific prohibitions, it adds, "Defile not yourselves in any of these things: for in all these the nations are defiled which I cast out from before you," and "For whosoever shall do any of these abominations even the souls that do them shall be cut off from among their people" and that it is for doing these things that the "land vomiteth out her inhabitants." Here the prohibitions of this chapter stand two of the tests. They are called abominations and one of such marriages is also called wickedness or enormity; and the heathen are blamed for them. In the New Testament one of the things prohibited in this chapter is charged to Herod by John the Baptist and for continuing to charge it he lost his life. "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife." And another thing was prohibited, a man's marrying his step-mother is denounced by St. Paul as "fornication and such fornication as is not even among the Gentiles." This whole chapter then is moral law and of eternal obligation. First then no one thing prohibited in it is more lawful by God's law than another. They all stand or fall together. If it is now unlawful for a man to marry his own mother it is equally unlawful for him to marry his aunt or his deceased brother's wife. All three are expressly prohibited in this chapter.

The peculiar form of words in which the various conjunctions of a man and a woman is here prohibited, is used to show that such conjunctions are abominable, are incest, whether they are made under the form of marriage or not.

First there is the general law: "None of you shall approach to any that are near of kin to him." Then there are thirteen examples given of such nearness of kin. Of thirteen six prohibit marriage with blood relations. A man shall not marry 1 his mother, 2 his sister, 3 his half-sister, 4 his grand-daughter, 5 his father's sister, 6 his mother's sister.

Seven prohibit marriages with those who are akin to him not by blood, but only by other some marriage, whether his own marriage or that of some other party. A man shall not marry 1 his step mother, 2 his father's brother's wife, 3 his daughter-in-law, 4 his brother's wife, 5 his wife's mother, 6 his daughter, 7 his wife's grand-daughter. The majority of marriages here prohibited in so many words are with women who are connected with a man only by affinity and are not blood-relations. So that the North Carolina papers which say that a man is free to marry any woman but a blood relation would have found favor with the Egyptians and the Canaanites and the Devil.

But these thirteen specifications do not profess to be all the cases covered by the general law, but only examples of those that are "near of kin to him." There

are two rules by which to extend the list of examples of nearness of kin. First the rule of converse. When a man is forbidden to marry a woman, conversely a woman is under such circumstances forbidden to marry a man. The Bible does say a man shall not marry his mother, it does not say a mother shall not marry her son, but by the rule of converse it implies it, and if such a so-called marriage were to take place the woman would be equally guilty with the man. Then in every case where it is said that a man may not marry such a woman conversely it may be said that in such cases a woman may not marry a man.

The law of analogy. When a marriage is prohibited between persons of any degree of kindred it is prohibited among all of the same degree of kindred. Thus when a man is prohibited from marrying his aunt because she is too near kin—a woman is equally prohibited from marrying her uncle, because her kindred to the uncle is the same as that of the nephew to the aunt. When a table is worked out by these two rules it results in the table appended to this discourse, which is part of that which has prevailed in the Church of England prior to the Reformation and exactly that which has prevailed in it since the Reformation. I say it is a part of that which has prevailed prior to the Reformation, because the Church, then by its own authority prohibited more degrees which the Bible does not prohibit, and also it prohibited marriages between sponsors and their god-children and some other degrees where the relation was only spiritual. But while these prohibitions enacted only by Church authority prevailed they used to give dispensations and permit marriages contrary to the prohibition in cases of urgency. In the Church of England these ecclesiastical prohibitions were repealed at the Reformation, and the table appended represents only those degrees within which marriages are prohibited by the word of God. For fourteen centuries no one ever attempted to dispense with these prohibitions. The first dispensation ever granted for a marriage forbidden in this table was when Pope Martin V (1417-1481) granted a dispensation to settle the succession in Navarre permitting a man to marry his deceased wife's sister. The next was when Alexander VI (Borgia 1492-1503) granted a dispensation to King Emmanuel of Portugal to marry his deceased wife's sister, and afterward to Ferdinand King of Sicily for a union with his aunt. The next Pope Julius Second (1503-1513) issued a dispensation to Henry Eighth to marry his deceased brother's wife. Every one will remember how in the Prophet Amos the fourth transgression (the middle one of seven) seems to be the crowning one which pulls down the thunderbolts of heaven. "Thus saith Jehovah. For three transgressions of Damascus, yea for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof: because they have threshed Gilead with threshing instruments of iron, but I will send a fire into the house of Hazael and it shall devour the palaces of Benhadad." So it was with Rome and the dispensations she issued for marriages contrary to the law of God, on the fourth God did not turn away the punishment thereof but wrenched from her the Anglo-Saxon people forever.

The instances in which we hear of this law being transgressed in North Carolina are where a man marries his aunt or oftener where a man marries his niece, still oftener where a man marries his deceased brother's wife, and oftener where a man marries two sisters in succession. For the first and third no defence can be made but the pretense that the expressed words of Leviticus do not bind us. For the second that though a man may not marry his aunt, yet a niece may marry her uncle which is the very same degree of kinship. But for the last which is the same degree of kinship of the prohibited marriage of a woman to two brothers successively, it is alleged that verse 18 of this same chapter allows it when it says "Thou shalt not take a wife to her sister to be a rival to her—besides the other in her life time." Now if a "wife to her sister" means "one blood sister to another blood sister," then such a marriage is prohibited in the life time of the first that was taken to wife. It is remarkable that the phrases which would be literally rendered "a woman to her sister," and "a man to his brother," occurs more than thirty times in the Hebrew Bible and never designate the blood relationship of two sisters or two brothers but simply the addition of one person or thing to another of the same kind. So here what is forbidden is the adding of one wife to another, or polygamy. What is here forbidden is elsewhere in the law of Moses, permitted "If a man have two wives, etc." Deut 21-15? Yes is there an inconsistency in the laws of Moses even in moral things? Yes. He, "if a man have two wives," is not more inconsistent with this prohibition of polygamy than it is to "and they shall be one flesh." But the Bible tells us expressly that on the coming of the people out of Egypt God first "gave them my statutes and showed them mine ordinances which if a man do he shall live in them," Ezekiel 20-11, but after they offended in the wilderness, "I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances wherein they should not live," Ez. 20-25. Divorce and polygamy and other things are examples of the statutes that were not good. How do you know then whether this 18th chapter of Leviticus consists of such statutes in which a man might live or statutes that were not good? It is the only place in the books of Moses which contains the phrase "which if a man do he shall live in them."

Next it is urged that in another place it is expressly ordered that if a man marry and die and leave no son "his husband's brother" shall take the widow to wife and raise up seed to his brother." Deut. 25, 5-10. It is argued that it cannot be downright immoral for a woman to marry two brothers in succession or else the bible would not have permitted it here and therefore it cannot by analogy be down right immoral to marry two sisters in succession. Answer. First: If God chooses to dispense with his laws that does not warrant us to dispense with them. Answer. Second: This ordinance is just in the right place to be one of the "statutes that were not good." Answer. Third: It is expressly said that God spoke the words in Leviticus. It cannot be proved that He spoke these—these like the words about divorce may be among these things which "Moses for the hardness of your hearts suffered you," Matth, 19-8. Answer. Fourth: It would be a strange thing if God commanded a man to take his brother's wife that she may bear children and then say, "If a man shall take his brother's wife it is impurity—they shall be childless," Deut. 20-21.

Now the truth is it was not the brother in blood but the next kinsman, who was not disqualified, who was commanded to do this. The Hebrew word for brother

is "ach," the word for husband is either "ish" or "enosh" both of which mean man. The word here translated "husband's brother," "Yabam" cannot mean brother-in-blood as often there would be none. If it means brother-in-blood then there is none the law fails of its object, for it does not require any but brother-in-blood to marry her. If one law provided that when a man's wife named no executor, that his brothers successively should have the right to qualify as executor, no one would imagine that this provision could extend to any more distant relation than brothers.

Next the only instance in Bible times that we know this law was put in practice is that of Boaz and Ruth, where there was no husband's brother in fact, but a much more distant relative felt bound to undertake that duty. As to the story in Tobit of the woman who had seven husbands without having children by any of them, and then one told to our Lord by the Sadducees of a woman in similar case six of whose seven husbands were "yabamin," there is reason to think that both were made up stories which prove nothing, and there is nothing to show in either case that the men were brothers in blood.

During fifteen centuries marriage with a deceased wife's sister was prohibited in the Church as Doctor Pusey has showed in his book on that subject. It was not doubted that marriages in the other prohibited degrees were forbidden. The only exceptions were those married under the dispensations of the Popes already spoken of. Now the rule of conscience is that if we doubt the lawfulness of an action we must refrain from it unless there is some positive law constraining us to it. This rule is that which is intended in the words of the Apostle "Let every one be fully persuaded in his own mind" and "He that doubteth is condemned if he eat." This rule will cause all to refrain from such marriages who even doubt of their lawfulness in God's sight. But in addition to this the scripture binds us "to take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men," Rom. 12-17, and St. Paul emphasizes this elsewhere by saying "not only in the sight of the Lord but of men." 2 Cor. 8-21. Now marriages which were forbidden by the church for fifteen hundred years, and are still regarded as abominable by the majority of those who profess and call themselves Christians, are so far from being honorable in the sight of all men, that they should be avoided by every follower of Christ.

TABLE OF PROHIBITED DEGREES.

A man may not marry his	A woman may not marry her
1 Grandmother	1 Grandfather
2 Grandfather's wife	2 Grandmother's husband
3 Wife's grandmother	3 Husband's grandfather
4 Father's sister	4 Father's brother
5 Mother's sister	5 Mother's brother
6 Father's brother's wife	6 Father's sister's husband
7 Mother's brother's wife	7 Mother's sister's husband
8 Wife's father's sister	8 Husband's father's brother
9 Wife's mother's sister	9 Husband's mother's brother
10 Mother	10 Father
11 Step mother	11 Step-father
12 Wife's mother	12 Husband's father
13 Daughter	13 Son
14 Wife's daughter	14 Husband's son
15 Son's wife	15 Daughter's husband
16 Sister	16 Brother
17 Wife's sister	17 Husband's brother
18 Brother's wife	18 Sister's husband
19 Son's daughter	19 Son's son
20 Daughter's daughter	20 Daughter's son
21 Son's son's wife	21 Son's daughter's husband
22 Daughter's son's wife	22 Daughter's daughter's husband
23 Wife's son's daughter	23 Husband's son's son
24 Wife's daughter's daughter	24 Husband's daughter's son
25 Brother's daughter	25 Brother's son
26 Sister's daughter	26 Sister's son
27 Brother's son's wife	27 Bro's daughter's husband
28 Sister's son's wife	28 Sister's daughter's husband
29 Wife's brother's daughter	29 Husband's brother's son
30 Wife's sister's daughter	30 Husband's sister's son

RICHARD BAXTER'S OPINION.

The law of nature is it which prohibiteth the degrees that are now unlawful; and though this law be dark as to some degrees, it is not so as to others. The law of God to the Jews, Lev 18, doth not prohibit those degrees thus named, because of any reason proper to the Jews, but as an exposition of the law of nature, and so are reasons common to all. * * * As it was God's exposition of his own law of nature, it is of use and consequential obligation to all men even to this day; for if God had told but one man, "This is the sense of the law of nature," it remaineth true and all must believe it; and then the law of nature so expounded, will still oblige."

In answer to the question what must a man do who has married within degrees expressly prohibited in Lev 18, he answers "he must not continue in incest."

To the question what must those do who have married within degrees not forbidden by name in Lev 18, but are at the same distance from the root with those named and seem to have the same reasons of unlawfulness, he answers: "If there be clearly a parity of degree and also of the reasons of the prohibition, then no doubt they must part as incestuous, and not continue in a forbidden state."

AN OLD SOLDIER, TURNER THOMPSON, DEAD.

He Was a Drummer in the 49th North Carolina Troops. Much Building Going on in and Around Woodleaf.

Turner Thompson, formerly of this place, died suddenly at the home of his son, Frank Thompson, in Cleveland, Friday night, of heart failure, and his remains were interred at Christ church, Cleveland, Monday. He was a drummer in the 49th regiment North Carolina State troops during the civil war, and he was loved by all who knew him. He leaves two sons and three daughters: Frank Thompson, of Cleveland; Turner Thompson, of Arkansas; Mrs. Alice Huffman, of Salisbury; Mrs. Carrie Lentz, of Zeb, and Mrs. Maggie Carrell, of Barber.

Radford Bailey has the lumber on the ground to erect two handsome residences for rent.

Lee Hart, of Arkansas, has broke the ground to build his new house on the lot adjoining Prof. Wetmore.

Will Wetmore has the material on his lot to build his residence.

Nath. Fleming is confined to his room with erysipelas. His position in the school is being filled by his son, Neely.

Frank Thompson, who has been very low with typhoid fever, is improving.

The young boys of Woodleaf have caught the rubber tire buggy fever. The latest case is Garland Pope. Look out, boys, cotton may not always be 12c per pound.

Miss Lizzie Kincaid, of Cleveland, was a visitor in our village Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. Jim Kennerly, of Spencer, visited Saturday night and Sunday at Rev. J. P. Lanning's.

Correspondence.

SOUTH ROWAN.

October 7th.—J. R. Stadler says he has an opossum that weighs 25 pounds, but nobody has yet got to see him. He says it will drag too much fat off of him to take him out of the box, and there is a partition in the box that prevents you seeing him.

Ground for oats and wheat is being gotten ready in a hurry as it is now time to sow oats and wheat sowing time is coming.

Daniel Powlas bought him a new breech loading shot gun quite recently.

Jim Yates and family, intend to move to the Kesler cotton mills at Salisbury as soon as the crops are gathered.

We learn that Augustus Ketur is going to move to Salisbury this fall.

Paul Cress, Robert Ritchie, Calvin Shire and Luther Barger went down to Martin Klutz's to take a big opossum hunt. They went about all night and caught three.

Last Sunday, about 11 a. m., we heard a shot fired one mile below Shuping Bro's roller mill. We wonder what kind of a neighborhood it is about there. You can hear shooting and cursing all night long. It looks like some one, whose duty it is, would look after this, as it is a disturbance to the neighborhood.

Henry Wensil will move from where he now lives to about one mile below Rockwell.

J. F. Park has bought a new disc wheat drill which he expects to use this fall.

Charlie Safrin, we learn, is going to move to China Grove soon.

Sampson Shuping is building him a new house, and it is now nearing completion.

The Sunday School at Rooks Grove church was discontinued last Sunday one week ago. We hope to see it open again next spring and be largely attended.

There will be quite a number of corn shuckings this week, so we understand. ROCKER.

UNION CHURCH.

Oct. 7.—We are having some very fine weather just now.

The farmers of this vicinity have been very busy plowing and preparing their land for oats and wheat.

There is no sickness in this community to report, only a few chills.

There have been several bales of cotton to pass our village going to the Salisbury market. Let the good work go on.

Goodman Bros. have their molasses factory in full blast turning out the sweet stuff.

C. M. Lyerly has a sunflower head that measures 18 inches. Brother Venus can you beat it?

Rev. Fesperman preached a very interesting sermon at Union church last Sunday.

Mrs. D. A. Hoffman and son, of Franklin, visited at her sister's, Mrs. G. A. Boger, last Sunday.

The stork visited Wm. Smith and presented him with a house keeper.

Dr. C. M. Poole and wife attended the tent meeting last Sunday night at Salisbury to hear Gov. Glenn.

Mrs. R. P. Roseman and son visited at C. C. Lyerly's last Sunday.

There was a large attendance at the Jr. O. U. A. M. meeting last Saturday night, and there was much important business transacted.

There was a marriage in Union church grove last Sunday, by Rev. Fesperman, when Miss Lemly became the wife of Lee Lentz, of Rockwell.

I guess I will ring off [for] this time. Success to the editor and all the readers of THE WATCHMAN. I remain THE HUSTLER.

Trial Catarrh treatments are being mailed out free, on request, by Dr. Shoop, Racine, Wis. These tests are proving to the people—without a penny's cost—the great value of this scientific prescription known to druggists everywhere as Dr. Shoop's Catarrh Remedy. Sold by Grimes Drug Store.

GOLD KNOB.

Oct. 7.—The time of corn gathering is at hand and many are taking advantage of it.

Cotton is opening fast, but the crop will be short.

Some oats are being sown.

O. H. Phillips is representing our community at the Crescent A. and B. C.

Mrs. Jno. H. Misenheimer, who has been sick for several weeks, is improving slowly.

Nearly everybody is sick with chills. Some families haven't a well person in them.

James M. Trexler, Esq., is putting the finishing touches on his new barn.

The patrons of the Barger school district have about finished their work on the building. It is now being painted and makes a handsome appearance which we should feel proud of.

We have something to report, but we do not know the particulars, therefore we will leave it till next time. Keep on wandering.

Corn shuckings have not taken hold as yet in the community.

The church at St. Peter's has been recovered and the roof has been painted. This adds much to the church. We are soon to install our new organ and dispose of the old one.

Mrs. J. A. Linn and Misses Lucy Barrier, Roxie Trexler and Maggie Park have returned from Charlotte where they represented the St. Peter's Missionary society in the 22nd annual convention of the Woman's H. and F. M. Society of North Carolina. They report a good time and that much and lasting good had been done at the convention, which met in St. Mark's E. L. church at Charlotte. These delegates made their report on last Sunday and we trust that many members will be added to the already large roll of missionary workers of the United Synod.

The committee of this district has hired Miss Maggie Park for their assistant teacher at the Barger's school this winter, but they are somewhat undecided as to the principal teacher.

From the Crossville, Tenn., Chronicle we clip the following: "Miss Clara Proctor, of Salisbury, left yesterday for Crab Orchard, Tenn., to visit a few days before returning home." We are just in receipt of a letter from Miss Proctor stating that she is doing well and enjoying her visit to her old home. LEE.

ROCKWELL ON THE BOOM.

Depot to Be Remodeled. The Barringer Manufacturing Co. Getting Busy.

Rockwell, Oct. 7th.—Rockwell is on the boom, buildings are going up all around and the town is growing fast.

Earnhardt Bros. have opened a general merchandise business in the store room of the new Junior hall. They will keep a full line of hardware, etc.

J. A. Heilig has his new house completed and is ready for the plasterer.

J. M. Holshouser, of Maiden, who is secretary and treasurer of the Barringer Mfg. Co., of this place, has arrived with his family and household goods.

The Barringer Mfg. Co. is pushing its work right along. The side track from the railroad to the factory is being graded now.

W. R. Misenheimer is building a residence here into which he will move when completed.

P. T. Bringle of Granite Quarry, visited H. L. McCombs Saturday night and Sunday.

Among those who went to Jamestown last week were: Julius Frick, H. W. Boat, Clarence Boat, Geo. Miller, Arthur Lentz and Homer Misenheimer. They came back Sunday and report a nice time.

Messrs. Sides and Lentz have bought a lot here on which they are placing lumber for a lumber yard.

What has become of Bro. Lee? We haven't heard from him in a long time. Wake you Bro., and get in the ring, if you can't get lively come over to Rockwell and let us give you the A. D. K. and we will give you a good time. JACKANAPE.