

## Extra Protections for Women

Exodus 21:7–11, 1 Peter 3:1–11

Can you imagine *selling* a child? This is not some outdated practice. It continues to happen. Children, of course, are little humans, and God’s people know that a precious child, bearing the image of Almighty God, is of great worth in the sight of our heavenly Father. His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, took up little children into his arms and blessed them. Jesus loves children!

The Bible teaches, “Lo, children are an *heritage* of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward” (Ps. 127:3). The word “heritage” is noteworthy, for it is related to *inheritance*, an important biblical concept. “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own *inheritance*.”<sup>1</sup> What will the Judge of all the earth do at the final judgment to a monster who would sell a vulnerable member of the LORD’s inheritance for profit?

Why would a parent sell a child? Perhaps, because of extreme poverty or famine, there was just not enough food to go around. Or a parent might think the child would have more advantages living with a richer family in a higher social class. I once met an old lady who told me that she had been “adopted out” as a young child. She knew of others in her same situation.

The Hague Convention, a treaty drawn up in the early 1990s, bans the buying and selling of children—but the practice continues.

Why would someone want to buy a child? Perhaps he wants servants, more children, or future brides for his sons. In the days before mechanization there was a constant need for workers in family businesses. Nowadays, some babies are bought by couples desperate to start a family, while others are sold to traffickers and forced to become sex slaves or beggars.<sup>2</sup> Wicked!

In 2 Kings 5 there is the story of Naaman, the commander of the army of the king of Syria, whose armies had gone on raids and brought back captive a young girl from the land of Israel. This little girl waited on Naaman’s wife. When Naaman contracted leprosy, this little girl said to her mistress, “If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! For he would heal him of his leprosy.” Here was a little girl who had been forcefully torn away from her family and familiar surroundings, and was resettled in a foreign country, far, far away. But instead of becoming bitter, she bore witness to her faith in the service of her master. This nameless servant girl is an example of steadfast faith, even in grim circumstances.

I have three points this morning: (1) Men should be protectors of women; (2) Men should support their families; (3) Men should keep their marriage vows. First,

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. 33:12

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child\\_selling#Malaysia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_selling#Malaysia) accessed 3-8-25

## 1. Men should be protectors of women.

We read in verse 7, “And if a man sells his daughter to be a female slave, she shall not *go out* as the male slaves do.” The word translated “go out” was used back in verse 2 of our chapter, and refers to going out free after completing six years of indentured servitude. As we saw last week, a bankrupt Hebrew man who could not pay his debts could be purchased by a fellow Hebrew who would pay off his indebtedness, take him home to live with his own family, pay his room and board, teach him a skill, and employ him in the family business. At the end of six years the master would send him away with a liberal supply from his flock, threshing floor and winepress, enabling the freed slave to go out, start his own business and make his own way in the world (Deut. 15:13–14).

But in the case of a female slave, she was to be treated with special consideration. If a man had purchased her with the intention of marrying her, but later changed his mind, he was to let her be redeemed by a fellow Israelite, who could take over her debts and bring her to live in his own house. The one thing the master was absolutely *not* permitted to do was to sell her to a foreign people. The word for “foreign” that is used here (נַכְרִי *nakhri*) means *Gentile* in modern Hebrew.<sup>3</sup> She was not to go out to the Gentiles but remain in the covenant community. She was not to be driven away from the pure worship of God. Even though her first master changed his mind and did not want to take her as his wife, and even though she was poor, and maybe from a lower social class, she was to be regarded as a member of the covenant people, worthy of respect. As Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 12, all members of the body are important: “the eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you’; nor again the head to the feet, ‘I have no need of you.’ No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be *weaker* are *necessary*. . . . the members should have *the same care for one another*.”

Remember Joseph, sold by his own brothers into slavery in Egypt? Imagine living in a strange country, far from a faithful church. Would you miss the pure worship of God? There are lot of places in Michigan with no faithful church. How we should pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into his harvest! As the hymnwriter put it, “Give of your sons to bear the message glorious; give of your wealth to speed them on their way; pour out your soul for them in prayer victorious; and all your spending Jesus will repay. Publish glad tidings, tidings of peace; tidings of Jesus, redemption, and release.”<sup>4</sup> All church members should do their part to spread the good news of Christ to unreached cities and towns.

A woman not having a husband should be regarded as a valuable member of the community. Older widows, especially, often perform a critical service in praying for the members of the body, as well as for new folks that come our way. Such a

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<sup>3</sup> See the note in BDB: “NH [New Hebrew] נַכְרִי = Gentile”; Brown, Driver, Briggs lexicon, נַכְרִי (Logos Bible Software).

<sup>4</sup> “O, Zion, Haste, Thy Mission High Fulfilling” (*Trinity Psalter Hymnal*, 419)

work may go unnoticed behind the scenes, but it is vital, and does not go unnoticed by God.

Men are to be protectors of women. In our New Testament text in 1 Peter 3 we read that husbands are to dwell with their wives with understanding, *giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life*. This little verse has a lot to teach about marriage. In context, the wife is both subordinate and equal. She is to be *submissive* to her own husband, calling him *lord* (with a small “l”)—yet husband and wife are *equals*, “heirs together of the grace of life”—both essential to the union. A wise husband, recognizing his wife’s value, gives honor to her as to the weaker vessel—weaker perhaps in physical strength, yet obviously able to do things that he himself cannot do. Both husband and wife are to have compassion for one another, exhibit brotherly love in their day-to-day dealings, be tenderhearted and constantly show courtesy to one another. Doing such things will ensure a long and happy union—a powerful testimony in a world of failed marriages.

In a godly society women are to be accorded special protection. This can be seen even in the creation account. As Gill insightfully observes, “. . . the woman was not made from the superior part of man, that she might not be thought to be above him, and have power over him; nor from any inferior part, as being below him, and to be trampled on by him; but out of his *side*, and from one of his ribs, that she might appear to be equal to him; and from a part near his heart, and under his arms, to show that she should be affectionately loved by him, and be always under his care and protection.” Yes! A wife is to be loved, cared for, and protected!

God made man and woman differently on purpose. Men generally have greater upper-body strength. Men tend to be more task-oriented; women generally are more people-oriented. Men are typically dominant and emotionally stable, while women tend to be more sensitive and nurturing. This is all part of God’s perfect plan for the well-being of humankind. Men should never use their power to abuse or mistreat women. Rather, they should be *protectors* of women. Boys should be taught from a young age, both by example and by specific instruction, to be protectors of women; this is part of our calling.

Some women do not want to be treated like ladies. They have been taught by feminists that a woman can do anything a man can. But God made men and women interdependent. As each recognizes his or her proper role in life, they together build a society to the glory of God. A man is to love his wife as Christ loved the church, and a woman is to submit to her husband in love. That is God’s perfect plan.

The Lord Jesus was a protector of women. We see this as he hung on the cross, telling his dear mother, Mary, with reference to the disciple whom he loved, “Woman, behold thy son!” and then, addressing the disciple, he said to him,

“Behold thy mother!” John relates that “from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.” Jesus was returning to the Father to sit at his right hand and intercede for the saints, but he wanted to make sure that his mother who bore him and brought him into this world was protected and cared for. All Christian men ought to follow his example. Men should be protectors of women.

Second, we see that

## **2. Men should support their families.**

Notice the phrase, “If he takes another wife, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing . . .” (Ex. 21:10). Here we see that a man is responsible to provide for his wife and family.

Our text specifically mentions food and clothing. Food and clothing are necessities. We can get along without Netflix, but we can’t get along without food and clothing.

Humans are *eaters*. When God made man, he told him, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely *eat*”—every tree except one, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve were free to go all around the Garden of Eden and sample the fruit of every tree, eating to their hearts’ content. Before the fall they lived in a world of plenty. God essentially told them, “Go ahead and eat.” The point is that God *knows* that his people need to eat.

People need clothing, too. Humans don’t have a thick coating of fur like most mammals. Clothing provides protection from sun, rain, wind and extreme temperatures. Yesterday wasn’t bitterly cold, but as I stepped out for a walk, I buttoned up my collar to keep out the wind. Clothing is necessary.

Deuteronomy 24:12 says, “If your neighbor is poor and gives you his cloak as security for a loan, do not keep the cloak overnight.”<sup>5</sup> Why was that? In ancient times clothing had to be made by hand, stitch by stitch, on crude looms. The poor couldn’t afford a second garment. At night, they took off their cloak and spread it over themselves to sleep. Without their outer garment they could not sleep.

Jesus refers to both clothing and food in the Sermon on the Mount when he says, “Why do you worry about *clothing*? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more *clothe* you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we *eat*?’ or ‘What shall we *drink*?’ or ‘What shall we *wear*?’ . . . For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.” Yes, God knows that his people need food and clothing.

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<sup>5</sup> New Living Translation

Since the fall we live in a world of scarcity, but our loving heavenly Father promises to provide for us. What he wants us to do is to seek his face in prayer and trust in him. Paul told Timothy, “. . . having *food* and *clothing*, with these we shall be content” (1 Tim. 6:8). Earlier he had written, “if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim. 5:8). If an able-bodied man fails to provide for his family, the elders and deacons of the church ought to have a talk with him. If he resolutely refuses to get a job and support his wife and kids—or if he has a job but spends all the money on himself and lets his family go hungry—then at some point he may become subject to church discipline. The Christian faith requires that we live according to Scripture. Scripture requires an able-bodied man to support his family. A man who resolutely refuses to do this should face discipline. Men—especially Christian men—should support their families.

Third,

### **3. Men should keep their marriage vows.**

Note the two uses of the word “betrothed” (קָדַם in this context, *to designate as a wife*). In verse 8 we read, “If she does not please her master, who has *betrothed* her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed.” That is, if the master who has promised the servant girl that he will marry her changes his mind, then he should give the servant girl the opportunity to be redeemed by someone else who is willing to marry her. This second master would reimburse the first master and take the servant girl for himself.

Another option would be to let his son to marry her. We read in verse 9: “And if he has *betrothed* her to his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters.” In other words, the master would continue to support the servant girl as a daughter until his son would take her as his wife.

In either case, the master would not kick her out on the street; the servant girl would be financially supported—that is, supplied with necessary food and clothing.

But when the servant girl becomes a man’s wife, she is to be cared for. If either another master or the first master’s son takes her as a wife, she is to be financially supported. If her husband “takes another wife, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marriage rights. And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free, without paying money” (vv. 10–11).

This is one of those things that nature itself teaches us. There is an adorable website entitled, “Twenty-one Animals That Mate for Life.” Examples: shingleback lizards, gray wolves, dik diks, gibbons, coyotes, bald eagles, Fisher’s lovebirds, Atlantic puffins, pigeons, titi monkeys. “Titi monkeys are very much like humans and display similar attachment traits with their partners. They form monogamous pair bonds and maintain them for the rest of their lives. When titi

monkey partners die, they exhibit symptoms of grief and distress.”<sup>6</sup> Isn’t the Creator amazing, to have built that into the natural world! To those who have lost a spouse, let me reassure you that the Savior *cares!* The God we serve is “the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Cor. 1:3–4 ESV). All things—*all* things that God brings into our life—work together for good for those who love him. He will never leave us, nor forsake us, amen!

Nature itself teaches that men and women ought to keep their marriage vows. But Christians have not only nature, but also the Bible. Because of an ignorance of the Bible’s teaching on marriage we have a lot of men and women today who have the idea that they can walk away from a marriage without consequences. They make commitments, but fail to keep them, and don’t even feel bad about it. One woman divorced her husband because he wasn’t making the kind of money she thought she deserved. When a faithful church disciplined her and ultimately excommunicated her, she walked away from the church and never looked back. Such behavior demonstrates that her god is money, not the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. She is an idolator. If she doesn’t repent, she will go to hell. In the meantime, she is setting a very poor example to her children. Their mother is not obeying Scripture, so why should they?

Let us never forget that God says, “I *hate* divorce.” Christians should hate it too, and they should earnestly pray for the children of divorced parents. We need to pray that they, as well as all covenant children everywhere, might be converted and turn to the Lord, their only hope.

You may be listening to the sound of my voice today and you might be thinking, “I’ve made a mess of many things.” If you are a man, maybe you haven’t been the protector of women that God wants you to be. Maybe you have not supported your family—or maybe you’ve supported them financially but abandoned them emotionally. Maybe you’re not spending sufficient time with your family. Maybe you’re not being the spiritual leader that you should be, reading the Bible aloud to your family, explaining what it is saying, praying with your wife and children, singing the songs of Zion together. Maybe you’re letting them be raised by TV and the internet. That is an abdication of one’s fatherly duty. God requires not only that you provide a living, but that you bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Maybe you’ve failed to keep your marriage vows, and love your wife as Christ loves the church. If so, you need to confess your sins to your wife and family, confess them to the Lord, seek his

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.wildlifeexplained.com/animals-that-mate-for-life/> accessed 3-8-25

forgiveness, and recommit yourself to your family. If you do, you will never regret it.

The Lord is faithful. He promises, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16:31). If you commit yourself to Jesus Christ and live for him, the Lord can transform your family.

I am not promising that life will be easy. There will be trials, but God will see you through. Let us each recommit ourselves to him. Our families will be havens of rest and happiness in a troubled world. Amen.