

THE END OF A MARRIAGE

Esther 1.13-18: The Grand Finale of Vashti's Disobedience (part 1)

Theme: Follow God's prescribed counsel and avoid making mistakes that have costly consequences.

Today we have a passage to study that lends itself to some very practical applications.

- I mentioned this passage last week and said we would be studying marriage a little more in verse 17.
- We're going to be looking at that verse (in its context) this morning: *The End of a Marriage* (v13-18).

But, let's first review what we've seen thus far: (Est 1) Vashti Dethroned

1. (v1-9) Three Great Feasts: They show us the peace, prosperity, and comfort in the kingdom.
2. (v10-12) The Great Failure:
 - (v10-11) The Desires of the King (nothing difficult, nothing weird)
 - (v12) The Disobedience of the Queen (Vashti simply didn't want to submit and obey)
3. (v13-22) The Grand Finale:
 - (v13-18) The End of a Marriage (our text for today)
 - (v19-22) The End of a Queen (Vashti is removed from the throne)

Obviously, from the title of our message this morning, we are going to talk about marriage.

- Vashti shows us a very good lesson on how women can quickly ruin their marriages.
- And we'll also take the opportunity to remind men about how they can do the same.
- So, what can we learn about “the end of a marriage” in Esther 1.13-18...?

I. (v13-15) The Wise Men: Insightful Counselors

A. (v13a) The King's Wise Decision: He asks for advice.

1. (v12b) Remember that Vashti's decision upset Ahasuerus: He's angry!
 - a) (v13-15) So he makes a very wise decision to ask advice of others instead of making a snap decision while he is emotional.
 - b) He shows us a good pattern to follow: Don't make a decision (especially a big decision) when you're upset or angry. Either wait until you calm down or, if the decision must be made immediately, ask for wise counsel. And that is just what the king does...
2. Ahasuerus asks for wise counsel from his seven wise men.
 - a) The Bible says his seven wise men “know the times” (v13a) *and* they know the law (v13b).
 - (1) They were intelligent and informed: They *knew* they law and judgment.
 - (2) They also understood “the times”: They were *aware* of the world around them (they were not a bunch of isolated intellectuals in a “think tank”).
 - b) This understanding of the wise men will help us put their counsel into proper context.
 - (1) Just like a lot of preaches and teachers today applaud Vashti for her decision to disobey the king, many of them also say that the counsel given by these wise men is bad.
 - (2) So, we need to understand this: These are men who *knew* the law and *understood* the application of of that law in their “times” (in their day, society, culture, etc.).
 - (3) These men are very adequate for the task at hand.

B. (v13b) The King's Wise Habit: Seek wise counsel!

1. Notice what this verse says: "...for so was the king's manner..."
 - The king made a habit (a manner, a custom) out of seeking wise counsel.
2. All of us would benefit from a "manner" (habit) like this!
 - a) All of us should build into our lives this kind of habit: Asking counsel and advise of those who "know the law" (the Scriptures) and who also understand "the times" (in which we live).
 - b) We can find this kind of wise counsel from wise people (those with knowledge & experience).
 - (1) (Prov 20.18) Every big decision ("purpose") we have to make should be evaluated with wise counsel (with good advise).
 - (2) (Prov 24.6) And, like Ahasuerus has seven men that counseled him, so should we seek out the advice of several people (a "multitude," not just one).
 - c) But we should also remember where we can find the unfailing advise of a multitude of perfect counselors:
 - (1) (Ps 119.24) The words of God should be our ultimate and final counsel in every decision.
 - (2) And this is why we can see a picture of the Word of God (Scripture) in the seven wise men that Ahasuerus consulted:
 - (a) (Ps 12.6) There are seven wise men: They picture the seven times God purified (refined) His words here on earth.
 - God's words were perfect when given and perfectly preserved on earth after that.
 - (b) (Est 1.14b) Ahasuerus' seven wise men were "first in the kingdom"—there was no one higher than they in their office.
 - (Ps 138.2) The same is said of God's Word.
 - (c) (Est 1.14, 16) Notice also who speaks for the seven wise men: **Memucan**.
 - i) His name means three things, each of which shows us a picture of God's Word.
 - ii) He name means established: (Eph 4.11-13, esp. v13) The Word of God **establishes** us (stable, rooted, firmly grounded) in the faith.
 - iii) His name means prepared: (2Tim 3.15-17) The Word of God **prepares** us for every good work.
 - iv) His name means strong in authority: And, obviously, Scripture is our **final authority**.
3. So as we work through this passage, let's remember that these seven wise counselors show us a picture of God's wise counselors: *The words of Scripture*.
 - a) Ahasuerus had the good habit (manner, custom) of seeking wise counsel, and so should we.
 - b) With that in mind, what is the wisdom given by the wise men—what is the insightful counsel given by the insightful counselors?

II. (v16-18) Their Wisdom: Insightful Counsel

A. (v16) Memucan speaks for the seven wise counselors.

1. Remember, he is a good picture of God's wise counsel: Scripture.
2. What this man says lines up perfectly with God's will that is revealed in God's Word.

B. (v16) A good reminder: Sin brings consequences... for the whole kingdom.

- Your sin will not only bring you judgment and grief, but it will also bring much the same consequences to those in your "kingdom" (your life).

C. (v17-18) Memucan warns the king of the dangers of not dealing with this issue.

1. Disobeying the king is bad, but there is another risk here that is even worse...
 - a) The queen could quickly become an example for the other women in the kingdom to follow.
 - b) Without quick and decisive judgment on Vashti for her disobedience, others will be tempted to do the same.
 - c) And so we see that the wise counsel from Memucan has a clear, defined, and even biblical purpose or goal: *Maintain order in the kingdom.*
2. Remember that Vashti's sin was her decision to not submit to God's established order.
 - a) God's order: (Gen 3.16) The man is the head of head of the woman; the woman is given to the man to be his helpmeet in the mission.
 - b) (1Cor 11.1-16) That same structure and order in society and the family is seen in the NT.
3. (v17-18) Memucan mentions two specific dangers of not dealing with this issue correctly:
 - a) First: (v17) Women will feel the liberty to despise their husbands.
 - (1) Now, I'm sure that is something totally foreign to us, in our marriages today...
 - (2) I'm sure no one has ever experienced this in their marriage since biblical times...
 - b) Second: (v18) There will arise "much contempt" and "wrath."
 - (1) The "much contempt" is the wife: Contempt for her husband (like Vashti).
 - (2) The "wrath" is the husband: (v12b) He'll get angry because of her contempt for him.
 - (3) Now, let me say this: "Contempt" is *the* sin of many (most? all?) women in the marriage relationship. It is an easy sin to fall into, and perhaps the easiest.
 - (a) This sin is one of the "biggies" when it comes to mistakes women make in marriage.
 - (b) There are certainly other problems that arise between a wife and her husband, but *this one* is more often than not the root that destroys a marriage.
 - (c) So, I'd like to use this opportunity to talk about how to destroy a marriage...
4. How to destroy your marriage in one easy step (wives first... then husbands...):
 - a) **First**: Women can quickly destroy their marriages by "wearing the pants in the family" (taking charge and usurping the authority of their husbands).
 - (1) This is like the sin of Vashti: Her husband was despised in her eyes... she had contempt for her husband... and she refused to follow him and his leadership (she took charge!).
 - (2) (1Tim 3.4, 12) We need to remember that the "rule" of the home (the leadership of the family) is the responsibility of the man (the husband, the father), not the woman.
 - (3) And here we see the mistake Vashti made:
 - (a) She was bossy, mouthy, and independent (*she* was in charge and *she* was *not* going to submit to her husband's wishes; *she* knew better and so *she* refused to follow him).
 - (b) And, therefore, *she* caused her divorce (just like many women today, even though they would never admit it was their fault).
 - (c) (v17) Vashti *despised her husband*, and because of that she refused to submit to him.
 - (d) (v18) That despising was the result of Vashti holding her husband in *contempt*.
 - i) To hold someone in *contempt* is to despise, dishonor, or disgrace them.
 - It's that *attitude* of disobedience, disrespect, disdain, disapproval, disgust, scorn, derision (you think the other is unworthy of considerate treatment).

ii) The opposite of contempt for your husband is admiration.

- To *admire* means to regard with pleasure and approval (synonyms: to esteem, to revere, to venerate, to honor).
- Book Recommendation: His Needs, Her Needs by Willard Harley.
 - ◇ I would recommend this book to both married people and single people. Married couples could benefit from a “refresher” on how to meet the needs of their spouses. Singles could greatly benefit from it because it will give them an idea of what they'll be getting into should they choose to marry.
 - ◇ I'm not a big fan (at all) of psychology, especially “Christian psychology,” and this book is written by a Christian who is a psychologist. It's not a Bible study; it's basically a summary of the experience of Harley's experience as a career psychologist's counseling married couples. So, even though it's a good book, be careful with it.
 - ◇ With that said, most of what he says in the book lines up with Bible principles (many of which are found in Proverbs 5). Those principles also line up with what I've experienced in my 20+ years of marriage and my 15 or 20 years of experience in the ministry as pastor.
 - ◇ His basic premise in the book is that men and women have different needs and they get married (in part) because they need the other to meet those needs (i.e., the helpmeet idea—you help meet the needs of your spouse).
 - ◇ One of the basic needs a man often experiences (a need his wife is to help meet) is that of **admiration**. Listen to what Harley says about admiration and think about how it is the polar opposite of the **contempt** many women feel and express toward their husbands. [From pages 156-157.]

...honest admiration is a great motivator for most men. When a woman tells a man she thinks he's wonderful, that inspires him to achieve more. He sees himself as capable of handling new responsibilities and perfecting skills far above those of his present level...

Admiration not only motivates, it also rewards the husband's existing achievements. ...it gives him more satisfaction than he receives from his paycheck. A woman needs to appreciate her husband for what he already is, not for what he could become, if he lived up to her standards.

For some men... [without admiration] they seem inherently more defensive about their shortcomings... they do not want someone to be critical of them...

*While criticism [which is an expression of **contempt**] causes men to become defensive, **admiration** energizes them and motivates them. A man expects—and needs—his wife to be his most enthusiastic fan. He draws confidence from her support and can usually achieve far more with her encouragement.*

- ◇ Harley goes on to mention that “carping and criticism” is dangerous: Nagging, finding fault, complaining, scolding, nitpicking, belittling... it's all an expression of a wife's contempt for her husband (vs. admiration).

◇ Women: If you do not meet this need in your husband (if you do not express your admiration for him... if instead you express contempt by nagging him, belittling him, ignoring him, disrespecting him, disobeying him...), don't be surprised when someone else does meet that need. Because, if it is a need for your husband (like air), you are to help meet that need. And if you choose not to, that need still exists and he will be drawn away into temptation to meet that need elsewhere because you played the Vashti.

(4) So, women, if you want to destroy your marriage in one easy step, just have an attitude of **contempt** toward him and **despise** him instead of showing him your **admiration**.

b) **Second:** Men can destroy their marriages by failing to be the leaders God expects them to be.

(1) If the husband fails to be the “head of the family,” who has to play that role? The wife!

(a) This was not the case in Esther 1 with King Ahasuerus (he gave clear direction).

(b) But, it is often the case in marriages today.

(2) So, like the Bible says, “Play the man”!

(a) Men, we will fail. Don't expect to be perfect. But, don't be lazy and indifferent either.

(b) Work hard (and well) at your job to provide for your family (be a good example).

(c) Work diligently at learning the Bible and doing what it says (be a good example).

(3) Men: If you want to destroy your marriage in one easy step, fail to be the leader and head of your family that God expects you to be... and that your wife needs you to be.

(a) And I know... we all have problems... we all fail... we're a mess. I get that.

(b) (2Pet 3.18) What God expects is that we grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (grow in Him, and you'll be okay).

c) **Understand this!** Your spouses failure is not your excuse or license to sin.

(1) Just because a woman fails in her submission does not mean the husband can just quit being the leader and walk off into sin.

(2) And just because the husband is not a good leader, does not mean the wife can be a Vashti.

(3) Do what God expects of you regardless of the other!

Conclusion:

Esther 1.13-18 shows us the end of a marriage.

- Vashti held contempt in her heart toward her husband and she expressed that contempt in despising him.
- She refused to submit to her husband, the king. She had her own idea of what was best. And by doing so, she caused her divorce—she ruined her marriage.
- Wives (future wives): Don't be a Vashti! Don't let contempt for him build up in your heart. Choose rather to admire him.
- Men: Don't tempt your wives to hold you in contempt. Be a leader your wife can admire.

And let's remember that sin always has consequences, both for us and for those around us.

- Vashti's sin certainly brought some quick and decisive consequences for her (divorced and dethroned!).
- But, it also affected the people in all the provinces of the kingdom.
- My sin affects me, and it also affects my wife... my children... my congregation... those in my “kingdom.”
- Your sin is the same: It has consequences, both for you and for those around you.

So let's strive to be like King Ahasuerus: Seek good, godly counsel... and follow it!

- Ahasuerus consulted with seven men that knew the law and understood the times in which they lived.
- Those wise men and their wise counsel picture the wise counsel we can receive not only from godly people, but (more than anything) they picture the perfect counsel that comes from God's Word.
- Read the Bible (God's perfect counsel) and do what it says.

Follow God's prescribed counsel Scripture and you'll avoid making mistakes that have costly consequences.