

82. A Rightful Betrothal Must Not be Broken.

Jacob served seven years for Rachel and. . . said unto Laban, Give me my wife. *Gen. 29, 20. 21.*

Two things make a rightful betrothal: the free will of the contracting parties and the consent of their parents.

Such rightful betrothal must not be broken. Why? Because holy wedlock begins with such promise. The matrimonial estate is entered into by rightful betrothal. When you open the Bible, you find it written on the first page of the New Testament that Mary was espoused, or promised, to Joseph. But in the very next verse, in verse 19, you will see that the Holy Ghost calls Joseph Mary's *husband*, although he was only engaged, or promised, to her. And the angel of the Lord, in verse 20, calls Mary Joseph's *wife*, although she was only promised, or betrothed. And in verse 24 the Holy Ghost again calls the Virgin Mary Joseph's *wife*. Thus the Holy Ghost has shown that a rightful betrothal is as binding as wedlock itself, yea, that the marriage is entered into by this mutual plighting of troth.

Already Jacob knew this. When he was ready to celebrate his wedding with Rachel, his bride, he said to her father Laban: "Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her." Deut. 22, 23. 24 a virgin who was only promised, or betrothed, to a man is called his *wife*, and if another committed fornication with her, it was punished as adultery; or in other words, the punishment was the same as if she had been a married woman. Thus also in the prophet Hosea, chapter 4, 13, brides guilty of whoredom are called spouses committing adultery.

From all this we see that engaged people are to be regarded as married people; for the promise and consent really make matrimony. This is the doctrine of the Lutheran Church, and it accords with Scripture. Act, therefore, in the fear of God when becoming betrothed; when lawfully engaged, beware of breaking faith!

Prayer.

O Thou immaculate and holy God, who didst institute holy wedlock, grant that I may not make members of fornication out of the members of my body, but at all times consider that my body is a member of Jesus Christ, my Savior. But rather let me ever, in ardent devotion and with a fervent longing for heaven, be zealously intent upon living in such a manner that my body may be a temple of God the Holy Ghost, never ceasing to love Jesus, who was crucified and given into death for me. Let me not go astray on the slippery paths of sin, but adhere to Thee and do Thy holy will. Amen.

How shall the young secure their hearts
And guard their lives from sin?
Thy Word the choicest rules imparts
To keep the conscience clean.

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