



EXPOSITION

Monthly e-Bulletin from Virginia Beach Theological Seminary



From My Window

In Michael Wilkins' commentary on *Matthew* (p. 105), he rehearses the famous short story written in 1905 called "The Gift of the Magi." In this narrative, Jim & Della are newly married and without money. It is Christmas Eve and both decided to do something special for the other. Della cut her knee-length brown hair to buy a gold watch chain for the pocket watch Jim had inherited from his grandfather. Meanwhile, Jim sold his prized watch to buy Della a set of tortoise shell combs for her beautiful hair. The author ends his story noting that each sacrificed his or her best for the sake of the other, and "let it be said that of all who give [such] gifts, these are the wisest." Beautiful as it is, Jim & Della's love does not compare to the love Jesus speaks of in John 15:13 and later demonstrates on the cross: "Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends."



In a span of 30 days from December 2006 to January 2007, Paul graduated from college, married Abbey, and began seminary at VBTS. Paul & Abbey joined Colonial Baptist Church and quickly distinguished themselves as a couple with a deep love for youth ministry. In June 2009, Paul began his ministry as the Youth Pastor of CBC. He graduated with his MDiv in 2012, and the Lord has since blessed Paul & Abbey with three children - Vail, Pilar, and Ezekiel. Paul is a spiritual leader at CBC and an articulate expositor of the Word of God. Paul explains his passion in ministry: "I enjoy teaching our teens to study the Scriptures and calling them to follow Christ with their whole life." Thanks, Paul & Abbey, for modeling grace in your ministry!



Truth for the Agora: “Breaking faith with the Lord” Numbers 5:6

Reading through the opening chapters of Numbers is not always the easiest undertaking for a 21st century believer. The first two chapters are a bit tedious as Israel takes a census of each tribe and learns how to be arranged around the Tent of Meeting. The next 100 verses explain the specific duties of the tribe of Levi as they “keep guard over the whole congregation” (3:7). Chapter 5 abruptly begins with Yahweh commanding the people of Israel to keep the camp clean because “I dwell in the midst of it” (v 4). Then, Yahweh explains how to make atonement “when a man or woman commits any of the sins that people commit by *breaking faith with the Lord*” (v 6). These words seem to leap off the page of Scripture. What does it mean to *break faith with the Lord*? Let’s consider this.

The phrase “breaking faith” is an ESV/NET Bible translation of the Hebrew verb *mā’al* (used 35 times in the OT – to act with fraud or treachery), and the noun *ma’al* (used 29 times in the OT – usually translated in the KJV as “trespass/transgression”). Though the Hebrew term for “faith” is absent, this phrase sends an unmistakable message that someone has committed a violation of trust and must face the consequences. Let me demonstrate this with a delicate human illustration. In Numbers 5:12, this verb/noun combination is used in the matter of marital fidelity. The law allowed a man to challenge the sexual purity of his wife if she “goes astray and *breaks faith* with him” (v 12). At its core, sexual infidelity breaks the sacred trust between a husband and wife. This is exactly the idea of Numbers 5:6. The translation “breaking faith with the Lord” establishes the meaning of the text: Sin is a serious issue before a holy God for it fractures the relationship between God and man. a āā aaa

To strengthen the translation of the noun/verb combination “to break faith,” it is instructive to note a few other examples of the 20 OT passages where these terms are found together. In Leviticus 6:2, someone may commit “a *breach of faith* against the Lord by deceiving his neighbor.” Again, in Joshua 22:16, the eastern tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an imposing altar by the Jordan River and were called into question by Israel’s leaders for apparently committing a “*breach of faith* against God.” Then, in 2 Chronicles 28:19 King Ahaz is said to have encouraged Israel to sin for he “*had been very unfaithful* to the Lord.” Clearly, these examples support the notion of unfaithfulness, the fracturing of a sacred trust.

The question now remains: Is there a way to restore a fractured relationship with the Lord? The essential issue of the text is this: man has sinned, and God considers this a breach of relationship. Thankfully, God was interested in restoration and clearly marks the path of return in Numbers 5:6-8. He states: realize your guilt (v 6b), confess your sin (v 7a), make full restitution if the wrong demands it (v 7b), and submit a blood sacrifice upon which atonement is made (v 8). This was not only good news for the ancient reader of Torah, but it is also a joy for us today. God is holy, and any sin fractures our relationship with him. Yet, his nature radiates grace and he stands ready to forgive and restore on the basis of his Son’s sacrifice (1 John 1:7). So, let’s heed and rejoice in John’s words (v. 9): “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”