

The Seventh Commandment; Chastity and Purity

Exodus 20:14

By Rev. Gordon Dane BSc. MA.

The seventh commandment says **Thou shalt not commit adultery** and when we come to the consideration of this sin we tread in very delicate ground. Many of you may feel uncomfortable about this subject. Timothy Dwight the grandson of Jonathan Edwards who was the President of Yale said that in his day, which was the late eighteenth, and early nineteenth century that there was a prejudice longstanding against the pulpit treatment of the sins of immorality. And if that was so then the difficulty that preachers face is all the more acute today. But in an autobiography written some years ago by a man who had been notoriously immoral in his younger days the man put some of the blame of his conduct on his never having heard a good outspoken sermon on the seventh commandment. Whether that was where the blame ought to have been laid is a matter for debate but I think we have to be careful that we so avoid the subject that we never make plain what the word of God has to say about these things.

And so conscious that we have both old and young in the congregation I think we ought to try and tackle this subject because we certainly live in a day when this subject needs to be tackled. In the 1960's there was what has been described as a "sexual revolution" I think that revolution is the right word to describe what happened because there was an overturning of what had been previously accepted standards and ways of life. But who was the revolution directed against. I think that the answer to that is that it was a revolution against God. And now the revolutionaries have grown up and those revolutionaries are the heads of our governments and the heads of our television companies and at the heart of our education authorities. And they are still pushing their revolutionary agenda. We all know what we have had to face in our country over the past number of years. There has been proposal after proposal and government order after government order and they are nearly all designed to legalize and legitimize and liberalize what the Bible labels as sin. We have had laws to legitimize sodomy and proposals, which in effect advise schools to promote promiscuous behaviour among teenagers. We have television and film industries that become filthier by the year pumping out pornography into society. And people have been so conditioned by the new morality that this commandment and its teaching is now totally foreign to most people.

My daughter knows a girl at university and she has moved in with her boyfriend. She said that her parents would regard it and I think she used the word "immoral" not to try out her relationship with her boyfriend before moving into something permanent. I was interested in an article in the latest edition of the "British Church Newspaper" headed "Views on moral values changing fast" And it reported how the "British Social attitudes survey" had found that British views on marriage and same-sex partnerships are becoming increasingly liberal. The survey taken in 2006 and just published found that 70% of people thought there was nothing wrong with sex before marriage compared with fewer than 48% in 1984. Two thirds thought there was little difference between being married and living together. In 1987 75% said that homosexuality was always or mostly wrong. Now only 32% have that view. Now men and women I think you can see confirmed in that what I have told you many times before and that is that our attitudes are being changed. And they are not being

changed for no reason. There is a campaign going on out there that is doing it. And Christians are not immune. They hopefully are insulated by the word of God but I think it is evident that there is a change even in the ways that Christians think about the issues covered in the commandment. More and more we are hearing of those who profess faith in Christ who are becoming involved in the sins this commandment forbids. So it may be uncomfortable for us to think about these subjects but I think we must. Many people in this age think that the morality of the Bible went out with the Ice Age. They will look on those who keep to that morality as being strange. We need to be absolutely clear what that Bible says about sexual immorality and sin. Now this is a big subject but we are going to look at it today under a number of headings

I The Declaration of the Sin of Adultery

First of all I want you to see the declaration of the Sin of Adultery. The commandment is very plain and clear here. It says **Thou shalt not commit adultery** What is adultery? Well adultery in its most straightforward meaning is where two people get into a relationship outside their marriage. It involves two things. It involves impurity and it involves unfaithfulness.

Now I want you to see what is advocated in the commandment first of all. It implies that intimate relationship is only to be within the confines of marriage. Fornication-, which is the sin of unchastity by an unmarried person, then is included in the meaning of what is said here. This then is a commandment, which commands chastity. John Calvin the reformer said, “Any form of cohabitation different from marriage is cursed in his sight” This is a commandment about sexual purity. Now that is not a standard that is highly prized in this day in which we live. Indeed the world portrays someone who has been sexually pure as someone who should be ashamed of the fact. The world has gone so far that it no longer understands what we are talking about here when we say that chastity is right and good.

But what I want you to see here very clearly is that Marriage is something that has been given by God. Away back when God created Eve we read that brought her to Adam. The first marriage was conducted in the presence of God. It was something that was blessed of God. But when He when God brought Eve to Adam He said in Genesis 2:23 **Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.** Of course Adam and Eve did not have a mother or father to leave, why then did God say what He did? Because he was setting up an institution. This was something that was going to be right at the very heart of society. And do you notice what God said about those who are married. They are to leave their mother and their father. So here is something that supercedes our relationship with our parents. And then the man is to cleave to his wife. And as has been often pointed out the world “cleave” means to “stick to like glue”. There is no thought of a breaking of that bond. And I want you to realize how the Bible underlines the fact that Marriage is for life. The word cleave there is a word that not only includes remaining faithful to our wife or husband but it means that we tenaciously resist any force that might weaken that union.

Now there are people who come today and they say “But I do not love my husband anymore” or “I do not love my wife anymore” Do you mean that I should stay with them? Well I think that it is an awful admission to make that you do not love them anymore. I want you to realize that when you made your vows at your marriage you were not asked “Do you love this man/woman” but you called on the people present that you would love them. You promised that you would love them in the future. Do you see the difference? In the Old Testament Scriptures marriages were often

conducted between two people who had their marriage arranged by their parents. But they came to love one another. But you say that you cannot work up love. It is something that you have or you don't have. I want to tell you that is rubbish. If you once loved your husband or your wife and you do not love them anymore it is because you have chosen not to love them. You have chosen to let the love go. You say but you do not know what I have to put up with. No, but I will guarantee you there have been people in the same position but they did not forget to love. And what you have to do is work at it. I know it may be hard but you promised it. You entered into an oath about it. You came before God and gave your solemn word and you just do not give up because it is hard. This commandment advocates chastity before marriage and faithfulness in it.

But not only do we see what is advocated by the commandment but notice how absolute is the commandment. There are no exceptions. You will have noticed when we dealt with some of the other commandments that there are exceptions. There are exceptions to not doing work on the Sabbath for example. There are no exceptions to this one. This is absolute. I know that people who get in the place where they are guilty of adultery can make all sorts of excuses and they can give all kinds of reasons why they have done what they have done. There are no excuses as far as God is concerned. We need to be absolutely sure about that. We notice the declaration of the sin of adultery

II The Depths of the Sin of Adultery

But not only do we see the declaration of the sin but I want you to see the depths of the sin. Remember what we have said about the commandments before. We have said that the negative includes the positive. And then we have said that the sin mentioned is really the head sin of a family of sins. And this is true here on both accounts. First of all we can put the commandment positively. And I think the Shorter Catechism puts it well when it answer the question "What is required in the seventh commandment? Where it says, "*The seventh commandment requireth the preservation of our own and our neighbour's chastity, in heart, speech and behavior.*" So not only have we to avoid adultery ourselves but we need to do all that we can to make sure than we are not encouraging adultery or sexual sin in others. Now those who sell pornography and those who produce it have a lot to answer for there. But could I say this to all of us but especially to the ladies that you need to be very careful in the way you dress and the way you behave so that you preserve your neighbour's chastity. Sometimes God's people dress immodestly. We read this in Isaiah 3: 16-17 **Moreover the LORD saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet: Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion, and the LORD will discover their secret parts.** And what a shame it was when the Lord had to speak like that to the daughters of the Church and he had to chide them for parading themselves like the world. We think of the instruction given by Paul in 1 Timothy 2: 9-10 **In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.** And that needs to be remembered. Proverbs 7:10 says **Behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart.** There is the attire of a harlot and you go out past the clubs on a Friday night and you will see it. But sometimes you see

something not very far short of it in church. Modesty is something that should be the hallmark of God's people. Do you like to flirt? If someone flirts with you will you engage in it too? You are playing with danger. Men and women we are commanded by this law to do all we can to preserve our neighbour's chastity.

But then there is the second principle that we have applied to these commandments and that is that the sin mentioned is the head of a family of sins, And again it is so with this sins. You think of what the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 5:27-28 **Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.** Now you see that it is certainly not just the act of adultery that is meant here. Adultery and fornication can also take place in the mind and in the heart. That is why we need to guard our minds. I want to tell you that we are bombarded with images in this day, which are anything but chaste, and the danger is that those images can stick in the mind. That is why we need to be very careful about what we watch because unless we are very careful we can be committing adultery in the terms of this commandment. Proverbs 6:25 warns about the evil woman and it says **Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids.**

III The Danger of the Sin of Adultery

But then I want you to see the danger of the sin of adultery. I want you to realize what a danger such a thing puts the soul in.

First of all notice the danger of the Aggravation of this sin. This is a grievous sin in the sight of God. I want you to realize how God looks at it because it has become so commonplace around us that people hardly talk about it any more. In Job 31: 11 Job calls it a heinous crime. That is what it is! I wonder if you have ever studied the judgement passages of the Bible and if you have you will probably have noticed how strong they are against adultery. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 6:9 **Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind...shall inherit the kingdom of God.** God bids us not to be deceived about the danger that comes with these sexual sins. Such sins are singled out here. Peter said in 2 Peter 2:9-10 **The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government.** Do you notice the way it puts it? **chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness** Sometimes when we protest about what the liberal laws government is bringing in on these matters we are accused with having a preoccupation with these sins but I want you to see how God regards it as heinous. You see there are sins that we might call magnet sins. They are sins that have a tendency to gather up and attract other sins. And these are sins that God has marked out for particular severity. Adultery is one of these sins. The Bible says **Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge**

But not only is there a danger because of the aggravation of the sin but because of the attractiveness of the sin. This is a very subtle and enticing sin. D. L Moody said that "lust is the devil's counterfeit of love." and the devil has it all dressed up. What is the harm in a bit of flirtation? What is the harm in admiring an attractive women or a handsome man? Well if you are married it is the road to disaster. How soon you can be sucked in. The Psalmist said **I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.** You cannot play with sin. God tells us that we need to be separate from it and we need to stay away from it. Never think that you can control sin. There is many a man and

many a woman who has set out on a dangerous course thinking that they are able to control themselves and they will not go further than they want to go. The problem is that when you give way to one sin it is not long before you want more. The apostle Paul said **Flee youthful lusts**. That is what you need to do with these things you need to flee them. The Shorter catechism says this in answer to the question “What is forbidden in the seventh commandment and it says? *The seventh commandment forbiddeth all unchaste thoughts, words and actions*. And it is very easy to have unchaste thoughts. There is a danger in the sin of adultery

IV The Destructiveness of the Sin of Adultery

But then could I think about the destructiveness of the sin of adultery.

Adultery will destroy you. The Lord says **Whoremongers and adulterers God will judge**

We have already seen that fornicators and adulterers will not inherit the kingdom of God. If you have committed adultery in your mind or perhaps even in reality then you need to come right now and confess your sin to the Lord. We need to have it cleansed. Let us see it as the serious thing it is. But not only is this sin harming you spiritually but it will harm you physically as well. I read where in America there are 29 forms of STD type diseases that are now rampant. I also read how the average lifespan of a heterosexual male was 67 years whereas the average lifestyle of a homosexual male was 41. He would forfeit half his life to buy into the idea that Homosexuality is a normal and healthy alternative to God’s established standards. And there is a spread of disease that can go along with an unchaste lifestyle.

Then not only can it harm you physically but it can harm you mentally. Dr Francis Braceland is the former chairman of the American Psychological Association, which is hardly an evangelical organization. Dr Braceland spoke at a Methodist Conference on medicine and theology and it was reported in Christianity Today. And he said that the premarital sex relations growing out of the so-called new morality have significantly increased the number of young people in mental hospitals. He told them that the more lenient attitude to such things on many college campuses had placed such strain on many young women that it had caused an emotional breakdown.

More than that the sexual complications and confusion about relationships as a result of permissiveness are known to be a primary factor in the suicides of young people. This is doing untold harm in society and people are being hurt.

Then not only will adultery and fornication destroy you but it will destroy your **reputation**. Of course today we are told that what a person does in private and what they do in public should be counted as two different things. A man can be the biggest scoundrel and cheat but as long as he does his job he should not suffer for it. I want to tell you that is the biggest load of nonsense. If a man can lie to his wife and cheat on his wife is he not going to carry the same sort of morality into all that he does? And no matter what people say they know it. How are people going to trust you when you cannot keep a solemn oath made in the sight of God?

Not only will it destroy your reputation but it will destroy *the marriage* bond. We live in a day of quick divorce. A lot of the grounds on which people can divorce now are not scriptural grounds. I have already said that marriage is for life. But there are really only two grounds in Scripture on which divorce is allowed and that is if an unsaved husband or wife leaves someone who is saved or if there is adultery involved.

Matthew 5:32 says **That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery**. And fornication includes adultery there. Now I

have to say that the parties do not have to divorce but the trust is so broken and the innocent party is so devastated that this is often the result. And I want to tell you that there is one sure way of wrecking your marriage and that is to get involved in adultery. It is a fool's course.

Not only will it destroy yourself and your reputation and your marriage it will destroy *others*. Adultery is going to destroy your husband or your wife first of all. I wonder if people could only see the anguish and the tears and the downright disbelief and betrayal that such a thing causes in a person that often is still loved if they would go on. I do not understand how people seem to be so blind to what it will do to the person they have cheated on. It brings devastation. In many ways the adulterer is doing something that their husband or wife will never recover from. It has been pointed out what a heinous sin this is because it destroys a number of people at once. It destroys the two parties involved and very often it destroys two families as well because not only will it destroy your husband or wife but it is going to destroy your children too if there are any. Now I am not going to dwell on this but it is often the children who really suffer in the middle of it all. They are left without one parent or the other. I want you to realize what a destructive thing this is. That is why God says **Thou shalt not commit adultery**

V The Deliverance from the Sin of Adultery

But the last thing I want you to see is deliverance from the sin of adultery. Immorality is certainly not a modern phenomenon. We read of many many instances of it in the Old Testament. We think of Reuben with Bilhah and David and Bathsheba and Judah and Tamar. This is almost as old as the world itself. In our modern day it is certainly not made any easier for we are being bombarded by pornography on every hand. Many have succumbed. But thank God there is deliverance. In 1 Corinthians 6 Paul gives a list of some of the most heinous sins. He speaks of some of the vilest of sins but then he says this **And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.** Do you remember the woman who was taken in adultery who was brought to the Lord Jesus? Those who were her accusers said she had been caught in the very act and yet the Lord forgave her and told her to go and sin no more. And I am glad that there is forgiveness with Christ. I am glad that though our sins are many they can all be washed in the precious blood of the Lamb. The Lord is the mighty Saviour. Men and women he can save from the most heinous of sins and that is the wonder of the gospel. It is good we have a gracious and forgiving Saviour. And when we are saved He gives us power to have the victory over sin. When we are pardoned the Bible says in Romans 6:14 **For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.** HE could lay down the rule for victorious Christian walk in Galatians 5:16 **This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.** That is where Christians obtain the power to be pure. But I want to tell you that this commandment demonstrates that there is no room for complacency in the hearts of the child of God. There are people who feel they are holy. It is only when we look at ourselves in the light of the law of God that we realize how unholy we are. But that drives us to Christ. You and I come very far short of what we ought to be but there is nothing imperfect about Christ. We rest in Him. I call on each one to rest in Him today.