

EXODUS 20:14 YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY

As we have seen in the past few weeks in our study of the ten commandments, there is much more than meets the eye at the surface. All of the commandments demand absolute perfection and they go much deeper and broader than what we realize. It is not enough to obey just the letter of the law, but also the spirit of the law.

The 7th commandment is the subject of our message today. It is dealing with adultery which is so damaging and it breaks so many other commandments. There is murder, in that the other spouses are being cheated on. There is stealing as there is a taking away of another who belonged to another. There is false witness as every adulterer is a liar. To cheat and deceive the other partner is lying. There is coveting, which is wanting the spouse of another. There is a breaking of the first 3 commands in having other gods, having idols, and taking God's name in vain, not honoring the name of God.

The breaking of this 7th commandment is so serious but it is taken very lightly in our society today. More than half of married men have committed adultery. A third of women are adulterers. It is such a common act anymore that people expect this to happen. Statistics say that two thirds of Christians say that divorce is reasonable under circumstances. The church is not the light and the salt that it needs to be. We are not salty and are tasteless and we are a dim light. This issue has fully developed from the 60's and 70's sexual revolution. Virtually it has almost gotten out of control. What does God's Word have to say about all this?

1. THE COMMAND

A. THE FOUNDATION

Once again, the command is clear and upfront. There is to be no adultery. That is understood very well. Adultery meant that a married person has sexual relations with someone who is not their spouse. The sacred union is not to be broken by anyone. Marriage was ordained by God and He gives us instructions for how we are to operate in that relationship. It is certainly for our own good. The following are some verses that go back to the very beginning to show what God had said about marriage and what can destroy that most sacred union. God had a perfect design.

Genesis 1:27-28, 2:24, Mark 10:6-9

B. THE WARNING FROM PROVERBS

Adultery stabs like a knife at the heart of the covenant between God and His people. Between husband and wife, it strikes at the heart of trust and love. It rips up the family. How can we trust each other if we can't trust each other in the most intimate of commitments? If we can't trust each other in marriage, how can we trust others in business, politics, and in life in general?

It is an attack on the very priority of society itself. Family is the very foundation of society. If it is broken up, so goes the culture. Adultery ruins the design of God. It destroys so much and is one of the grossest of all sins.

Proverbs 5:1-23, 6:23-33,

Adultery makes humans look like animals fueled by lust.

Drunken people wake up to people they don't even know.

It is glamorized by Hollywood, movies, books, television, magazines, and yet when one is caught, the media reports on how wrong it is.

The big story right now is Tiger Woods and all his adulterous relationships. You can't turn on the television without hearing something about him. The world on one hand practices this sin, but when one is caught, those very same people are pointing the finger and speaking out loudly against the adulterer. What a hypocrisy.

C. THE EXAMPLE OF THE CONSEQUENCES

Because of David's sin with Bathsheba, there was much repercussion.

David was miserable for the next year and was relieved by it when Nathan the prophet confronted him with his sin. David, then confessed his sin. For a whole year, his unconfessed sin ate him up.

2 Samuel 12:1-15

Tiger Woods has had to cancel his upcoming tournaments, an indefinite leave. His sin has caused so much grief for himself, his wife and all his fans throughout the world. This will stick with him the rest of his life.

D. THE CHAIN OF THE ONES EFFECTED

As far as David's story is concerned, it not only effected him and Bathsheba, but her husband was killed, their baby son died, the whole nation of Israel was effected, in that they lost respect for him. There was turmoil in David's family such as with Absalom. This sin stuck with him for the rest of his life. It was a blot on a good reputation. Adultery is a very serious sin. It is first of all, a sin against God, a sin against our bodies, against the spouses, and all the immediate people who know them, such as family and friends and co-workers. So many are effected by one act. It brings on so much misery for so many people.

In our own country we had a president caught in a shameful situation. This was brought out in the media daily. It was brought to the attention of everybody in the nation. Society knows it is morally wrong. All knew he committed adultery, no matter what he termed it.

Society condones it and tolerates it, and even encourages it.

But even worse, the church is lax in the discipline and it too tolerates such a horrific sin. In some churches there are patterns of adultery known by the congregation and yet unfronted. The church accepts the breaking of a covenant, which ruins the witness to the covenant of salvation.

E. THE POSITIVE ASPECT

As in other commandments, there is the negative, telling us what not to do. But behind the negative statement is the positive. The positive holds up and preserves marriage.

This commandment, as we have already pointed out, is rooted in the foundation of creation. There was to be an honoring of marriage. We are to see the absolute sacredness of marriage and the purity it exhibits.

Ephesians 5:30-33, Hebrews 13:4

2. THE EXTENSION OF THE COMMAND

A. THE HEARTS IMPURE DESIRE

Jesus spoke of inward desires. The heart can be corrupt and it spews out defiling things. What is in the heart starts the external act. So sin is not just the act itself, but it is in the heart where it starts.

Mark 7:22-23

It is an affront of a holy God.

B. JESUS CLARIFIED THE LAW

Jesus raised the bar much higher than what was set by the Pharisees.

Matthew 5:27-28

Jesus says to plan adultery is to commit adultery. It is now about the heart and its inclination. It stands against adultery with our eyes, brains, and imagination. Jesus gave us a high standard. We cannot imagine or lust because that is the same sin as adultery. The essence is the same.

Jesus was saying it was sinful to have an adulterous thought.

C. SPIRITUAL ADULTERY

God uses this language quite a few times in the Old Testament. Israel, so often, played the harlot. Spiritual adultery was the prime sin.

They had other gods as they had manifested sinful hearts.

Jere 3:1-3, 6-9, Ezekiel 23, Hosea 1:2

Why is sexual adultery the backdrop for spiritual adultery? The answer is that we can easily understand spiritual adultery. The covenant breaker in the marriage violates the sacred covenant by inviting within the marriage someone who does not belong, one who has no rights to what the adulterer would give.

God gives us a picture of sexual adultery so that we would understand that spiritual adultery is all throughout the Bible. In spiritual adultery, we forsake our Creator, and deny Him His rights.

Spiritual adultery is not just about other people. It speaks of all of us.

Israel constantly played the harlot by engaging in pagan worship practices.

The church is considered to be the bride of Christ. But the church plays the harlot, like Israel. Some of the church is looking for extra-biblical revelation and not being satisfied with the revelation God has already given us through the Word. People are not content with God.

We turn to other things so often and turn our attention away from God.

We are spiritual adulterers.

3. THE APPLICATION

A. MORTIFY

We are to kill, cut off, starve to death, the sin we battle.

Leviticus 20:10, Deut 22:22, Colossians 3:5

Matthew 5:29-30 We are to avoid whatever it takes to keep from lust.

We might need to do something drastic as possible. We are to choke the very life of sin. We are to hack sin to pieces.

B. MAKE A COVENANT WITH YOUR EYES

Job 31:1 Determine not to look at anything that would cause sin.
We have to be careful. We can't get into situations that could be tempting.
We need to plant hedges. Don't be alone with a person of the opposite sex. No going to lunch with or counseling with the opposite sex, by yourselves.

C. REALIZE THE JOY OF FAITHFUL MARRIAGE

What a blessing it is to have a spouse that is faithful and both are committed to staying faithful.

Proverbs 5:15-19, Eccl 9:9

D. PRACTICE THE PRESENCE OF JESUS

Knowing Christ is there with you and is everywhere. That alone, should be enough to keep anyone from adultery.

E. FILL THE MIND WITH SCRIPTURE

We should be so filled with the Word that it would guide us when we are tempted to go a different way.

F. ACCOUNTABILITY WITH OTHERS

We need to rely on other Christians to keep ourselves from temptation.

G. HOPE FOR THE GUILTY

Some can believe they are finished because they have broken the command. But that is not true. There is good news, even for the guilty. We are all guilty. In some manner, like the other commandments, we all have broken this one. Jesus said he who is without sin, cast the first stone.

There is hope for the guilty adulterer.

Rom 8:1 There is now no condemnation.

We are forgiven, and we are not condemned if we are in Christ.

God's redeeming love is demonstrated through Christ who gives us grace greater than all our sin, even grotesque adultery. We need to understand the grace and mercy of God in all of its glory against the backdrop of sin.

Jesus bore the penalty for us to the utmost, so we are not condemned. Because of Christ, there is hope for the guilty, of which we all are.