

Because I Reverence Him, I'll Live in Purity

Ex 20:14; Mt 5:27-32; LD 41

Reformed Church of Wainuiomata, 24 January 2021, 10:30

(Sermon put together by Pieter van Huyssteen, with due acknowledgement)

Intro

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Last year during COVID lockdown, we had sermons on the first *five* of the Ten Commandments.

Well, this morning, we want to hear a sermon on commandment number seven: ***You shall not commit adultery.***¹

But before we do that, here's a question: Why should any person be confronted with God's commandments? Yes, why is it important to hear a sermon on any of God's Commandments?

Well, here, in brief, are three reasons.

- **Here's the first one:** *Mirror!* Yes, you see, studying God's commandments is like looking again into a mirror and see your unkempt hair or dirty face! Indeed, you have a thorough look at God's commandment, and then you say, "Wow, is *that* how far off the mark I am!"

Then? What do you do when you register *that*?

Well, here is what we do: You come on your knees before the Lord Jesus Christ who died for your sins! You see, it's only through Him that there's forgiveness!

Indeed, the sinner who is convicted of his own sin – yes, who saw his "dirt" in the mirror – is the one who falls on his knees and says, "Lord Jesus, here I am!" "Please forgive my sins!"

Mirror – a mirror who does not lie – that's the first reason why you & I need to hear God's commandments!

- **Here's the second reason:** *Gratitude!* Yes, God's commandments are like a "manual," so to speak, by which you & I can show our gratitude to God – yes, a "recipe" which we could follow to praise God by our godly living!
Gratitude – that's the second reason why you & I should hear God's commandments.
- **Here's the third reason:** *Protection!* Yes, just as *obeying the traffic rules of New Zealand* protects us on our journeys by car, motorbike or bicycle, so, too, does *keeping God's commandments* protect you & me on our life's journey.
Yes, as Deut 6:24 says: If we live by these commandments, it will be *for our*

¹ [New American Standard Bible: 1995 update](#). (1995). (Ex 20:14). La Habra, CA: The Lockman

Foundation.

*good always and for our survival.*² Indeed, as our Lord Jesus says, “***Do this and you will live.***³ See? We will have spiritual healing if we live by God’s commandments!

Well, this morning, it’s our turn to be confronted with the *seventh* Commandment: “***You shall not commit adultery!***”

And let’s be honest: This commandment is not just for those who are married! No! It’s a commandment that applies to every human being – whether you’re married or not, whether you’re an adult or still only a boy or girl whose future marriage must be protected!

Well, our sermon has five points.

Here’s the first one...

1. The Creation of Man & Woman

Genesis 1 and 2 tell us that God created us *in His own image*, and that He created us *male and female* (Gn 1:27).⁴

And so it happened that human beings are either male or female. *God* created this distinction – therefore it is good!

Yes, *God* created our sexuality. Thus, no one should be ashamed or feel guilty about the feelings/attractions God has created in him/her. Yet, you & I should always live within the boundaries set by God’s commandments!

He created them male and female.

But Genesis 2 gives us more information, i.e., that God made Adam first, upon which God said, “***It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him***” (Gn 2:18).

Now, the words *helper suitable*⁵ do not mean someone who can do little or big jobs for her husband, but rather a person who could complement him *in his very being as a man*; yes, a person distinct from all other creatures who were not human (cf. Gn 2:19-20).⁶

Thus, God made woman from a rib He had taken out of the man (Gn 2:22).⁷

² [New American Standard Bible: 1995 update](#). (1995). (Dt 6:24). La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation.

³ [The New International Version](#). (2011). (Lk 10:28). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁴ ***So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them*** (ESV).

⁵ BDB translates עֶזֶר כְּנָגֵד as “a helper corresponding to him.” Ordinarily the preposition נִגְדֵל means “in front of; in the sight of,” but combined with the preposition בְּ (i.e. כְּנָגֵד) it means, “according to what is in front of = corresponding to” (cf. Brown, F., Driver, S. R., & Briggs, C. A. (1977). *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (p. 617). Oxford: Clarendon Press.)

⁶ ***Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name.***²⁰ ***The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.***

⁷ ***And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man*** (ESV).

Why was she made out of a part of Adam? Why did God not make her anew like He had made Adam – out of ***dust from the ground*** (Gn 2:7)?

Well, the point is, as Adam later on says (cf. 2:23),⁸ this way, “***This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh,***” i.e., she is not a separately made new & different creation.

But why was she made from man’s *rib* (and not, for example, from a bone in his foot)?

Well, perhaps to indicate how close to Adam’s heart God wanted Eve to be!⁹

Now look, Genesis 2:24 gives a solid foundation for the seventh commandment when it says, “***Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to*** (NASB) – ***cling to*** (NIV) ***hold fast to*** (ESV)¹⁰ – ***his wife, and they shall become one flesh.***

So, the Bible presents marriage as a *tight bond* between husband and wife; and as an institution of God, right at the dawn of history!

And our Lord Jesus reaffirms God’s intention with this relationship when He says in Mt 19:6, “***So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let man not separate***” (NIV).

God has made marriage to be a lasting bond between *one* man and *one* woman.

Adultery should not even come upon their “radars”!

Well, this brings us to point 2 in the sermon...

2. No Third Party (God’s laws on this)

My brother & sister, sinful man keeps on inventing smart ideas to change God’s commandments.

You see, about 20 years ago, the wife of a South African immigrant to New Zealand became severely depressed – to the point that that whole family suffered as a result of it. This is what her husband then asked me: “Pieter, don’t you think that polygamy will be a good answer to my situation?” “I mean, if I could get a second wife, then she could become a great help in our household!” “She could do all the household duties, pick the children up from school, help them with their homework, and in the evening when I come home exhausted from work, she could have dinner ready for all of us!” “You see, Pieter, that way we could have a healthier family life!”

My brother & sister, that man was serious – and he repeated his seriousness! But I told him, “Nice try, but that’s not what God’s Word teaches us!”

That man was dreaming up *wonderful excuses* to sin – to practise polygamy and adultery.

Some others have used *words* to put flowers over their sins. You see, some people have swapped the words *polygamy* and *adultery* for the better-sounding word *Polyamory*¹¹ (lots of love). And, in their mind, it’s all okay to have more than one

⁸ Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

⁹ That “she should forever cling to his heart” (Kuyvenhoven, A. 1988. Comfort & Joy: a study of the Heidelberg Catechism. Grand Rapids, MI : Faith Alive. p.239).

¹⁰ The Hebrew word is יָקַר which does mean “cling/ cleave to.”

¹¹ [pōl'ē-äm'ə-rē] (cf. <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/polyamory>)

wife as long as all just happens between “consenting adults.” And so, they have thrown away *God’s consent!*

My brother & sister, if sexuality and marriage have been made and given by the Creator of the universe – *and they have*; and if the price Christ has paid to save us, among other also from sins against the Seventh Commandment – if that price was tremendously costly – *and it was*, then why will we not, out of reverence for (and in awe of) our God and Saviour, live by His ordination!?

Besides, if we were to *not* live by His ordination and rules, not only will we deeply hurt ourselves, but we will incur God’s wrath!

In marriage no third party is allowed, whether it is because *he* suddenly wants another woman or whether he wants another man; and whether *she* wants another man or another woman!

Perhaps you ask, “But, pastor, don’t we see polygamy in the Bible?” “So, is polygamy really a transgression of the seventh Commandment?”

My brother & sister, the first case of polygamy mentioned in the Bible is that of Lamech who had two wives, Adah and Zillah.¹²

But you & I must remember that Lamech belonged to the godless offspring of cursed Cain. Thus, who could possibly follow Lamech’s example? Not you & I!

Then, many centuries later, we see polygamy again in the sinful actions of the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob.

In Abraham’s case, the motivation for his polygamy – yes, for taking Hagar although he already had Sarah – was not lust, but out of mistrust of God’s promise to give Abraham a son.¹³ Thus, Abraham’s polygamy came about as a sinful self-help scheme born out of disbelief in God!

And the fact that some other Bible characters practised polygamy, still does not make it right!

You see, even the fact that some of Israel’s *kings* had many wives, does not mean polygamy is right.

After all, it was sin in their hearts that caused them to take more than one wife. You see, apart from lust, it is true that Solomon’s motivation for having hundreds of wives and concubines was to not stand back before all other Middle Eastern kings.

Solomon wanted more wives for the same reason that some powerful magnates & rich lords, today, want a fleet of expensive cars and private jets – simply to show off their status!

That’s sin born in selfishness and pride!

When the Seventh Commandment says, “***You shall not commit adultery,***” it all comes down to God protecting marriage against a third party.

My brother & sister, Paul (by the Holy Spirit) writes to Timothy (in 1 Tim 3:2 & 12) and he says, “***An overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife... Let deacons each be the husband of one wife...***”

¹² cf. Gn 4:23

¹³ cf. Gn 16:1-4

See? By insisting that church *office bearers* should have only one wife, God set the standard for the *whole Christian community*!

And let's not make a mistake by thinking that the Bible's definition of adultery is restricted to only men, or to only married men and married or betrothed women. No, when we look at what the *whole* Bible has to say about adultery, then we see that "**You shall not commit adultery**" applies to all human beings – yes, whether you are married or unmarried, and regardless of whether you are male or female. How come?

Well, because the Seventh Commandment protects the present marriage and even the future marriage; yes, even of him or her who is at the moment only a young boy or girl.

And so, it is clear that marriage is an exclusive partnership of one man and one woman, and, as our Lord Jesus said, this was "...**from the beginning**" (cf. Mt 19:4-6).¹⁴

3. The Marital Covenant

My brother & sister, what *bonds* a marriage?

Well, in *our* culture it is usually mutual physical attraction (pretty looks and intellect) that at first draws the two together.

However, pretty looks will one day fade!

So, what bond is there which is better than mere mutual physical attraction?

Well, is it not *covenant loyalty & faithfulness*?

Talking of faithfulness, do you know what the Dutch word for "marry" is?

It is "trouwen." And "trouwen" comes from the word "trouw" which means "faithful!"

Thus, when Dutchies say "We're going to get married" (in Dutch: "Wij gaan trouwen"), they literally say, "We're going to *faithful!*" – in better English it means "We're going to pledge our *troth (faithfulness)* to one another!"

Now, where did the Dutch people get this wonderful expression from?

I mean the Germans don't have it. The French don't have it! The Italians don't have it! As far as I know, no other European nation has it!

So, how come the Dutch people, instead of saying, "We're going to get married," say, "We're going to faithful" ("We're going to pledge our faithfulness to one another")?

Well, it could only be from the Bible!

For, remember how, in the Bible, God or Christ is often compared to a husband or groom, and God's people to a wife or bride?

And remember what God said in Hosea 2:19-20?

Yes, remember how, despite Israel's unfaithfulness to God (their husband), God expressed His gracious loving faithfulness to them (His "wife") by saying, "**I will betroth you to me forever** (See the Dutch word "trouwen" = "faithfulness"?); **I**

¹⁴ *Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female,* ⁵ *and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?* ⁶ *So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.*

will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord...¹⁵

And here's the beauty: the Hebrew word for "love" – used here in Hosea 2:19, means not just "love," but "gracious loving faithfulness!"

Boys & girls (young people), someone told me the other day that, when young people in New Zealand get married, they're not shy to admit that they don't go into that marriage with the commitment to stay together for as long as they both shall live!

But *you* are church youth! *You* belong to God's covenant people! So, God wants you to see His standard for marriage! It's "I pledge you my troth!" "Yes, on oath and by signed contract before God and human witnesses, I pledge you my faithfulness!" (In Dutch: "Wij gaan trouwen").

4. Divorce & Remarriage

Divorce is something that God never wanted.

This is clear from our Lord Jesus' words in Mt 19:8, *Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.*

So, because of sin, divorce came into this world.

And even if adultery is committed by only one partner in the marriage, it seriously affects both.

That's why our Lord says in Mt 5:32, "*But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress* (literally: causes her to undergo adultery),¹⁶ *and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery*" (NIV).

Did Christ really mean that a woman who gets put away by her husband will be guilty of adultery if another man marries her?

My brother & sister, our Lord was against the easy divorce habits by which some people quickly jump from one relationship to another.¹⁷

You see, if a man divorces his wife, then she and other men should be careful.

Why?

Well, because she and her husband should first be given the chance to get back together again. If this couple is not allowed that chance, then, who knows, it might well be that, before the two could be reunited, "*she, in her deserted state, could give in to the temptation of becoming married to someone else. So, the erring husband*

¹⁵ וְאֶרְשָׁתִיךְ לֵי לְעוֹלָם וְאֶרְשָׁתִיךְ לֵי בָּצָק וּבְמַשְׁפֵט וּבְחֶסֶד וּבְרָחֶםִים: אֶרְשָׁתִיךְ לֵי בָּאָמוֹנָה

¹⁶ Note: the Greek is using the passive voice of the verb – it uses ποιεῖ αὐτὴν μοιχευθῆναι (lit. "...he [her husband] causes her to suffer adultery"). μοιχευθῆναι is an aorist passive infinitive of μοιχεύω, i.e. in the passive it means "to undergo adultery." Thus, her husband *does* wrong; she *suffers* wrong.

¹⁷ Cf. Kuyvenhoven (1988:243).

should be given the chance to correct his error, that is, the chance to go back to his wife.”¹⁸

My brother & sister, it is clear: our Lord hates adultery and He hates divorce. But, together with some Reformed commentators, I believe that in Mt 5:32, our Lord was not talking about a divorced woman whose divorce had been well and truly established.¹⁹

What's more, we should also note that our Lord never taught that, in the case of adultery, “the offended mate *had* to get a divorce.”²⁰ Certainly there can be forgiveness, patient healing, and a restoration of the broken relationship. This would be the Christian approach to the problem.

5. Chastity (Answer 108)

- As said before, the Seventh Commandment prohibits more than just literal adultery committed by a married person.
- After all, our Lord says in Mt 5:28 that even just looking at a woman (or, for that matter, “a man”) with adulterous thoughts – even just *that* is sin!
- Thus, although the seventh commandment mentions only one sin, it prohibits also all other acts of sexual immorality:²¹ prostitution, paedophilia, homosexuality, pornography, etc. etc.²²
- *So serious* is sexual immorality that it was on the priority list of things not to do when the Apostles wrote a letter to the Gentiles who had just come to faith in Christ. This is what it says:
 - ***You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality*** (Acts 15:29 – cf. also v.20)
- In other words, “Gentiles, if Jesus is of any importance to you, you will, for His sake, abstain from sexual immorality!”
- So, here’s advice for all the brothers & young men: Men, the old saying is ever-valid: you cannot prevent a bird from flying over your head, but you can surely prevent it from making a nest in your hair!
- And, sisters/young ladies, here’s advice also for you: Watch the way you present yourselves so that you don’t become a stumbling block for any man?
- I love the illustration given by one commentator: “If there is a fire in your house, you don’t have to worry as long as the fire is burning in the furnace or in the fireplace.

¹⁸ My adaptation of the words of Hendriksen, W. 2004. New Testament Commentary: exposition of the Gospel according to Matthew. Grand Rapids, MI : Baker Book House. p.306.), “...she, in her deserted state, should yield to the temptation of becoming married to someone else. (Thus,) the erring husband should be given an opportunity to correct his error, that is, to go back to his wife.”

¹⁹ For such commentators, cf. footnotes 17 and 18

²⁰ also cf. Hoeksema, H. 1955. Love thy neighbour for God’s sake. (In: Hoeksema, H. ed. The Heidelberg Catechism: an exposition – Part Three: Of thankfulness. Vol IX. Grand Rapids, MI : WM B Eerdmans. p.107).

²¹ cf. Rm 13:13 ***Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy.***

Col 3:5 ***Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.***

²² cf. also DOUMA, J. 1996. The Ten Commandments: manual for Christian life. Translated by Kloosterman, N.D. Phillipsburg, NJ : P&R Publishing. p.246

There the fire fulfils its function and warms the house. But if the fire runs through the living room, it destroys your house. When sexual desires fulfil the God-assigned role within the marriage, lives are warmed and blessed. The flames are beneficial. But if sexual desires run wild, people are ruined.”²³

- We want to conclude!
- So, remember what we asked in the introduction: Why should you & I (any person) be confronted with God’s commandments – also the seventh commandment?
- Well, firstly, because it’s a “**mirror**.” And looking into the “mirror” which this commandment holds out to me, I’m driven to my knees before Christ!
- Secondly, there’s **gratitude**! Yes, because I’m cut to the heart by how Christ gave His life for me, I will want to keep this commandment as a way of thanking Him!
- And lastly, there’s **protection**, as keeping this commandment will bless me and my wife/husband and our family with great peace!
- Do you love Jesus?
- Then remember what He said: “***If you love Me, you will keep My commandments!***”²⁴

AMEN (2,911 words excluding footnotes)

²³ Kuyvenhoven (ibid:242)

²⁴ John 14:15