

Text: Exod. 20:14

Title: "You shall not commit adultery"

Time: 6/13/2021 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: A week ago Saturday, I was sitting in the Nashville airport waiting for a delayed flight crew for my journey back home to Boston. The terminal was crowded with many people, but one particular family caught my eye. There was a young pregnant mom, who looked exhausted as she pushed her little four-year-old (or so?) girl in a stroller through the crowds with some bags in tow. The little girl looked as worried as the mother looked exhausted.

And then suddenly, the little girl's face lit up with a huge smile, and her eyes gleamed as she focused on a welcomed sight. It was her dad, carrying her little brother in his arms, laden with a heavy backpack full of all you need for a traveling family with young children. It was obvious to me that this little girl in that moment possessed a wonderful appreciation for the creation of God we call *marriage*. She was blessed by the marriage of her mom and dad.

This morning we have come to the Seventh of the Ten Commandments, which forbids adultery. Scripturally, we cannot understand the meaning of this Commandment unless we first understand the meaning of marriage as a blessing from God, the way this little girl did when she saw her dad approaching. She knew instinctively, right then and there, better than most, that people must not commit adultery.

Scripturally, God gave man the institution of marriage because it was not good for man to be alone (Gen. 2:18).

Uniquely among the gifts of God, the gift of marriage tells us something about God's own loving desire to not be alone. Hos. 2:19-20, "And I [the Lord] will betroth thee [Israel] unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord." 2 Cor. 11:2, "I [Paul] have espoused you [the local church at Corinth] to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."

And so in this unique way, the gift of marriage reminds us that, unlike other created things, men and women have been made in the image of God. God determines to not be alone, and it is not good for man, made in God's image, to be alone. Gen. 1:27-28a, "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he Him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply."

Just like the prohibition against the destruction of human life in the Sixth Commandment, the Seventh Commandment's prohibition against the destruction of human marriage is all about the fact that we are not animals; we are made in the image of God.

This morning I want us to find the answer from Scripture to three questions about marriage and adultery. First, "How does adultery destroy human marriage?"; second, "Who are the adulterers?"; and finally, "What is the penalty for adultery?"

I. How does adultery destroy human marriage?

Application: The Bible's answer is twofold in this regard. Adultery is the destruction of God's design for biblical mar-

riage; and adultery is the destruction of the love of biblical marriage.

1. Adultery is the destruction of God's design for biblical marriage (Gen. 1:26-31; 2:18-25).

Illustration: Writing in 1965, two years after my birth year, Ronald Wallace wrote this about the Seventh Commandment: "[Through neglect of this command,] the whole general conception of what marriage is within secular society [is] lowered, and a real rift [is] acknowledged between Church and State, as appearing this point" [*The Ten Commandments*, p. 147]. In a generation's time since 1965, that rift between church and state has not only appeared, but also has widened to dimensions beyond repair.

Last Wednesday, President Biden tweeted out that Congress needs to pass "The Equality Act." On the same day, his justice department backed off and revised statements they had made about their commitment to protecting religious schools from government oppression over their unwillingness to allow homosexuality on their campuses.

The Equality Act and its form of justice takes for granted that God's design for marriage is obsolete. Rather than treating this view of anthropology as a religious view, it treats it as a biological fact. The problem with an assumption like that, of course, is that God's designs never suffer obsolescence. Biological facts were created by God.

Application: Our passage gives us some of the components of God's design for His creation – marriage:

1. Man is made in God's image by God. Start here, or His design will never be rightly comprehended.

2. God made men males and women females.
3. God made men and women to be fruitful and multiply heterosexually, not homosexually.
4. God created the shameless one-flesh experience of reproduction for the cleaving together of this marriage union.
5. And God loves little girls like the one I saw in the airport, and He wants them to be secure in a home founded on a loving biblical God-designed marriage.

That is God's design for marriage, and any rejection of this design is a violation of the Seventh Commandment. As the rift between our culture and this truth becomes deeper and wider, God's people must stand true to God's design in this regard. To do so is not sexual discrimination; it is religious discrimination.

But freedom of religion never asks us to deny our own religious view in order to favor that of another. The whole point of religious freedom is that each of us can discriminate between true and false religious ideas for ourselves with a free conscience. The destruction of God's design for biblical marriage is adultery. Few today believe that, and our government may soon outlaw believing that by passing "The Equality Act," but we must be faithful, nonetheless.

2. Adultery is the destruction of the love of biblical marriage (Eph. 5:21-33).

Application: Biblical marital love is self-sacrificing, covenant-keeping, jealously monogamous, and fruitfully childbearing. Adultery is self-serving, covenant-breaking, carelessly polygamous, and tragically child-destroying.

Illustration: That young husband and dad, who was getting his family through the Nashville airport, was a picture of biblical love. He was serving his wife and their children, not

himself. He was keeping his promise for better or for worse in covenantal love. He no doubt would have punched me jealously in the nose if I made a pass at his wife. He was the hero of his little ones. Should the day come when he commits adultery, that day will be a day when all of those blessings of his love change into something that is its opposite.

So how does adultery destroy human marriage? It denies God's design, and it is void of true love.

## II. Who are the adulterers? (Matt. 19:3-10).

Application: What do Abraham, Jacob, Judah, Moses, David, and Solomon all have in common? According to what the Lord says about adultery in Matthew 19, they were all guilty of breaking the Seventh Commandment.

Five women are mentioned in the lineage of Christ in Matthew 1 – Rahab, Tamar, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary. Three of the five were adulteresses. Mary was thought to be so, first by her fiancé Joseph, and then by others throughout her life. So, one biblical answer to our question this morning, “Who are the adulterers?”, is that some of the godliest heroes of the faith were people who at some point violated the Seventh Commandment.

Here in our Matthew passage, after Jesus explains what adultery is, did you notice the reaction of His disciples, some of the godliest heroes of the New Testament era? “If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry” (v. 10). That is not the reaction of men who took for granted the importance of “‘til death do us part.”

On three occasions, Jesus referred to the world in which He lived as “an evil and adulterous generation” (Matt. 12:39, 16:4, Mark 8:38). Certainly, He meant this in some sense as

a metaphor for false religion. Solomon's idolatry was linked to his adultery (1 Kings 11). The one-world religion of anti-christ is pictured in Revelation as a seductive harlot (17:1-6). Sexual attraction and false religion have always coexisted throughout the history of pagan worship.

But closer to home, I believe there is a sense in which Jesus meant this description of His world literally. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explains that to look on a woman for the purpose of arousing and satisfying sexual appetite in your heart and mind is to commit adultery (Matt. 5:28). Our world of rock-n-roll, TV, internet, social media, virtual reality, and even robotics has only put the temptations we and our children face for adulteries of the heart on steroids. In a word, just as with all the other of the Ten Commandments, we have broken this Seventh Commandment. We have been the adulterers. Jesus would say of us and our world, we are "an evil and adulterous generation."

III. What is the punishment for adultery? (Psalm 51; 1 Kings 14:8).

Application: Under the legislation of Israel's theocracy, both men and women who were found guilty of adultery were to be executed (Lev. 20:10, "And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.") Other forms of violations of the Seventh Commandment also incurred capital punishment in this context.

Psalm 51 tells us that there was a way out, and Ahijah's message to Jeroboam about David in 1 Kings 14:8 reminds us that David found it. The Psalm is a song that David wrote after Nathan the prophet exposed his act of adultery

and the murder he committed to cover it up. Notice especially verse 7 - "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

*Hyssop* is first mentioned in Exod. 12:22, where the Israelite used a branch of hyssop to apply the blood of the Passover lamb to his doorposts and lintel. It is next found in a beautiful ceremony in Leviticus 14, where it had a role in the application of the blood of a bird to a leper who had been cleansed of his leprosy. A second bird was allowed to live and fly away free after the cleansing.

So, what is the punishment for adultery? The punishment is death, but the good news is that there is hyssop and the blood of atonement, cleansing, and freedom from sin, symbolized by the blood of the lamb of Passover and the bird of a leper-cleansing ceremony. The lamb and the bird could die instead of Israel's firstborn sons and the lepers.

David must have felt like a leper in his sin when Nathan exposed him, but he knew a leper could be cleansed. The Apostle John explained what cleansed David of his sin and whose blood it was that did the cleansing: "the blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:7b-9). The punishment for your adulteries and mine is the shed blood of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who never once broke the Seventh Commandment.

Conclusion: And so, as I think of that little girl in the Nashville airport again, I happen to know that she is growing up in a world in which her mom and her dad are going to face many temptations and pressures that could cause them to

violate the Seventh Commandment. In fact, statistics show that the marriage of her parents is just as likely to be dissolved as it is to survive the sinful flesh of their own hearts and the influence of this evil and adulterous world.

What can give us hope in a world like that? One thing only – David’s hyssop. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin when we repent and ask for that forgiveness.

Have you prayed, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow”? If so, the Lord shall say of you too: “You are my servant, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all your heart, to do only that which was right in mine eyes.” That is what the cleansing blood did for David, who committed adultery. It can do so for us. There is wonder-working power in the blood of Christ. The miracle of a cleansed heart is one He alone can do.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

–David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*