

## RETURNING TO SEXUAL SANITY

**Exodus 20:14** - "You shall not commit adultery."

**Deuteronomy 22:22** - "If a man is found lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman. So you shall purge the evil from Israel."

**Matthew 5:27-30** - "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' [28] But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. [29] If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. [30] And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell."

**Matthew 19:4-6** - "He answered, '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 they shall become one flesh'? [6] So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.'"

Here again, we are dealing with truth that is *foundational*. It's foundational in the sense that nothing else can be properly built into a life until this truth is remembered and applied. This is a truth that makes everything else work right in life and in society.

Sexual sins are sins of a certain *nature*. Not only do they *break God's laws*, but they *create a momentum for further sin down the road*. They produce *potential bondage* that the present moment doesn't even imagine.

The words of this seventh command are words to hear while you're still young. These are words to remember *before* you make mistakes that, while forgivable, leave debris that never goes away. These are words to reassess when you feel life falling apart through trial and pain - when the pressure to conform to this world screams out for surrender.

Especially at those difficult times of temptation to compromise, go back to the foundations. Keep the basics strong and sure. Remember, it's the foundations that hold everything else upright.

### 1) **GOD ASSUMES THE RIGHT TO TELL PEOPLE HOW TO LIVE THEIR PRIVATE, PERSONAL LIVES**

**"What a person does in his private life is his own business. Just as long as his public work is in order and he doesn't hurt anybody, then live and let live."** We're hearing that a lot these days. And that's why mankind has a very hard time with the God of the Bible. **He insists on telling people how to live their personal lives. God legislates morality.**

There are certain *kinds* of morality man doesn't mind having spelled out. He doesn't mind talking about *corporate morality*, how people should treat other people, respecting their rights, or how children should be protected, or how the work place should be kept free from discrimination or harassment.

It's fine, yea imperative, to legislate that kind of morality. We'll gladly discuss oppression in South Africa, or the protection of baby seals, or the need to establish rules for more equitable education opportunities for the poor.

And we should pursue all of those things. This is right and good. The problem isn't in emphasizing any of those things. The problem lies in ignoring more basic things. The problem isn't what we include in our quest for goodness. It's what we omit. God insists when we talk about moral goodness we *include* personal righteousness. In fact, we need to *begin* with personal righteousness:

**Matthew 23:25-28** - "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. [26] You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. [27] Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. [28] So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

Give special attention to **verse 26** - "You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean." Here Jesus makes a vitally important and relevant point for any modern discussion of morality and goodness. The only way the *outside* of anything stays truly clean, is if the *inside* is clean first. The only way to clean the *public* side of anything is to first clean the *private* side. Always initiate your quest for purity with the sins closest to your own moral and spiritual center. Start with your *own* inner life. Start with your own heart.

That's the whole point of those words. Clean the inside *"so that"* the outside will be clean also. Cleanness starts inside. Then it moves to the outside.

Man loves to discuss the **horizontal** part of morality. He loves to talk about how people should treat people. He loves the parts of the Bible that say we should love our neighbor as we love ourselves. He omits that the Bible says I must **first love God** with all my heart, soul, mind and strength. **Then** I should love my neighbor as myself.

First there is a **vertical component** to righteousness. Then there is the **horizontal component**. The vertical part comes first. The horizontal part follows. You can't get the second part right until you have the first part right.

Why are we taking the time to discuss all of this? Because this seventh command talks about **how people live on their own time**. It addresses the way they live **in their own homes**. It addresses their relationships in some bar, or who they build their personal relationships with after work.

The command doesn't deal with the public me. It deals with the private me. And God says, **"That part of your life is My business. I'm in charge of it. In fact, you must listen to Me privately before you can be all you should be publicly."**

So, before anything else, God calls me to recognize His claim on my **whole** life. Until that is understood, this command will fall on deaf ears.

## 2) THERE IS NO HUMAN COVENANT GOD IS MORE INTERESTED IN PROTECTING THAN THE VOWS MADE AT THE BEGINNING OF A MARRIAGE

**Matthew 19:4-6** - "He answered, "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 they shall become one flesh'? [6] So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

Jesus calls us to remember **four truths about marriage**:

- a) **Marriage is a divine institution.** It's not a human idea or invention. Man doesn't define or redefine the family. It's not his to tamper with. It starts with a covenant union between a man and a woman. Not two men or two women. Not one man and several women. God invents and sets the terms on marriage.

That means **same-sex marriage** can never actually exist. Even if our culture makes it **legal** and **acceptable** it never can actually exist in God's eyes. He has **defined** marriage in terms that can't be realized in a **same-sex** partnership.

- b) **Marriage is the highest human relationship.** Jesus said it even takes rank over the **parent-child** relationship. It is the highest relationship because it alone pictures the relationship that exists between Christ and His church.
- c) **Marriage makes the wedded pair one flesh.** There comes to be a sharing of beings that transcends any other relationship on earth. It's like the relationship between the hand and the arm. You can't cut one off without destroying the other.
- d) **For all these reasons, marriage is to last until death.** Look at those last words of Jesus - **"Don't anybody break up a marriage!"** Not anyone. Not ever.

That's where this seventh command comes in. **God puts a wall around every marriage.** He says that this relationship is totally off limits to every other person on earth.

Later on, in these very commands, God will restate His views on marriage. It's as though He can't let the subject go without one more reminder that goes even deeper than this seventh command. In the **tenth command He forbids even the desire for another man's wife**. This is His way of saying, **"You can't even think about crossing the line into another person's marriage. I forbid it."**

And I fear for certain situations in our own church where people have planned a future wedding and relationship while still married to their present spouse. **Friend, that is a damnable course of action.**

And let no one think that later on, when the plans have fallen into place, that somehow, words of apology will be offered to Jesus and all will be well, as He just blesses them in their new marriage. **It will never happen.** Planned, presumptuous sin against light is not something that easily rinses out of the life. The stain goes deeper and deeper with time. It corrupts everything it touches.

That leads me into the next point:

## 3) WORDS OF WARNING TO ANY WHO ARE IN EVEN THE EARLY STAGES OF A RELATIONSHIP WITH A MARRIED PERSON

**Hebrews 12:12-17** - "Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, [13] and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. [14] Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without

which no one will see the Lord. [15] See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled; [16] that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. [17] For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears."

Let me start by underscoring a phrase that most Christians find unbelievable. It's found right in the middle of **verse 15** - "**See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God....**" What can that mean - "**...fails to obtain the grace of God?**" I thought God's grace covered everything. You know, "**...where sin abounds, grace did much more abound.**"

Listen, the writer of Hebrews isn't talking about any *shortage* of God's grace. He's talking about something different. **He's talking about people who miss God's grace. People who never find it.**

And then he tells us the reason. He talks about people (and uses Esau as an example) who commit to a course of action that **shuts out the option of true repentance.**

He is talking about people who make a **value choice** and willfully shut God out of the picture. It's not just that they make a mistake. **They commit to a course.** They **commit to a course that shuts God out of their future.** They commit to something that leaves no room for God and **they refuse to turn from it.**

Here's the essence of this sin. It's committed by people who **refuse to change their mind** and hope that someday, in the future, **God will change His.**

So Esau stands as the ultimate bad example. The text says he wept and cried and tried to drum up repentance. And the text says, **he was "rejected"** - **Hebrews 12:17** - "**For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.**"

"Well, that can't happen today, pastor Don. We live under the new covenant - the covenant of grace." Really? Then let me ask you this. Why, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, does the **New Testament** use Esau as a warning? What's this warning about Esau doing in the age of grace? And there's only one answer to that. **You and I, just like Esau, can miss grace.** "See to it that no one **comes short of the grace of God!**" That's a New Testament plea.

Listen, I believe that there is no situation God's grace can't reach and redeem. But people can **commit to a course of rebellion, and justify the fruit of sin, and build a taste of the delights of sin, to such a degree that they never do repent. They weep. They moan. They go to church. They kneel at altars. They make promises to change. But they never do the one thing that real repentance requires - they never do forsake their sin!**

They try to do the impossible. They try to **embrace their planned course of sin, and repent and follow Jesus at the same time.** And it can't be done. Whichever one you choose, you **must exclude the other.**

## 5) TO THOSE WHO ARE MARRIED AND WANT TO STAY PURE

I have two areas I want to approach in closing:

a) **First, I know that there are people who feel trapped in horrible marriage situations.**

There are people in this church who have spouses who drink. There are wives in this church who have husbands who ignore, or worse, mistreat them. There are scores of people who have come to the Lord and find themselves living with a spouse who makes life a nightmare because of the saved partner's recent choice to follow Jesus.

I would not want to say anything that would make your situation harder or more unbearable. I pray that God's grace will sustain you. And I don't have clever, pain-relieving solutions for the bleeding Christian husband or wife who doesn't feel they can go on living in the marriage in which they find themselves.

But I have come to **some** conclusions. I know that many times their situations, while very difficult, aren't as unique as they frequently think. I have come to see that almost everybody gets something on the plate of their life that tests the reality of their Christian convictions.

Some people have a child dying with cancer. Some people lose everything they own materially. Some husbands have wives who hate being near them. Some parents have teenagers who break their hearts and betray everything they were ever raised in.

And Paul was executed. And Peter was crucified upside down. And John was beheaded for holding to the truth. And the book of Hebrews writes of precious saints who were **sawn in half** because they wouldn't compromise what they knew to be true.

**Listen. Everyone has something, now or later, that pushes everything in their world to the wall. And every time that**

*happens, God wants to purify something special in your faith. And, at the very same time, there will also be the enemy's voice saying, "I'll get you out of this if you will just bow and worship me!"*

And here's what happens next in those back breaking situations. God *gives grace to people who stay true against all odds. People who compromise their way out of the pain, miss God's grace.*

To those who are in a horrible mess of a marriage I would offer this word. *It's better to honor God in a rotten marriage (even if it never gets better) than to disobey God and find short-lived relief from your trouble.*

It's *always* a mistake to trade the *long stretch of eternity* for *short term relief on earth*. That's what that passage in Hebrews is all about. Esau traded his birthright - *his future* - for a pot of stew - his *present* craving for satisfaction.

And the writer of the book of Hebrews writes passionately to people under pressure and trial and says *"Whatever you do, keep the long picture in mind. Don't cave in to some short term solution that violates God's long range plan for your soul!"*

- b) *Second, I want to remind all married people of the cost of staying pure in this world.* Purity doesn't come cheap. This is a subject Jesus talked about very specifically:

**Matthew 5:26-30** - *"Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. [27] You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' [28] But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. [29] If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. [30] And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell."*

The subject here is adultery (Jesus specifically mentions the seventh commandment), sexual purity, and the roots of immorality and marital disaster.

*When is the heart pure and the marriage safe?* The answer most of us would give is *when there is no unfaithfulness or adultery*. But Jesus says that's the wrong answer. Purity starts farther back - long before any unfaithfulness ever enters the picture. Marriage is to be protected, not only from *deviant acts*, but from *unpoliced desires*.

*Refuse harmless infatuations with anyone of the opposite sex. Never meet for prayer with a member of the opposite sex who isn't your spouse. Don't go alone to minister to a member of the opposite sex who isn't your spouse. Don't allow your mind to make comparisons between your spouse and another member of the opposite sex.*

"Well, pastor Don, I think you're being a little paranoid about all of this."

Listen, adultery doesn't start in some hotel room. It starts somewhere in the back of some lazy Christians's mind. The back of your head - that's where the rest of your body makes up its mind. *And your theology isn't going to turn you around once you've gone down that road in your infatuations. It's not what you believe. It's what you think about that steers your life.*

But here's the important point in Jesus' words about purity. *Purity isn't impossible. You just have to want it more than you want anything else.*

I knew a man in Prince George, B.C. who used to work with the aboriginal population in the northern part of the province. These people would work hard at trapping animals in the winter months. They would describe many times, in collecting the traps, that the trap had been sprung, but the animal was gone. The snow was covered with blood. And a small, mangled portion of the animals paw would be left in the trap.

And the hunter knew instantly knew what had happened. The animal wanted freedom so much, it actually *gnawed off its own paw to escape*.

**Matthew 5:29-30** - *"If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. [30] And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell."*

Several points deserve thought here:

Have we become so slick in our minds that we've removed ourselves from the plain words of Jesus that teach the ***truth that what our eyes focus on and what our hands find to do can take the whole body to eternal lostness in hell?***

Because that's what He's warning about. And we're way past the point where it's adequate to just sort of hope and dream that maybe we will have a nice marriage and buck the odds of unfaithfulness all around us.

People who want ***purity*** - people who want ***freedom*** - can't just wish for it, or even pray for it. ***They have to plan for it. They have to renounce for it.*** Jesus says sometimes it means cutting off a hand.

But do it all with joy. And remember, not only will it guard your marriage. Jesus says, when you do this relying on His grace, it will get you into heaven.