LD 41; Matthew 5:27-30; I Cor. 6:12-20; The 7th Commandment- The Pure Life I. The Foundation of this Command II. Avoiding Sexual Sins III. Pursuing a Life of Purity

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, the 7th commandment is under attack today. The ease of access and the constant sexual bombardment makes living a life of chastity and purity extremely difficult. In earlier times, adultery and pornography were limited to specific places. Pagan temples and brothels were the place that these sexual sins came to dwell. Avoid those places- don’t go down that road- and you could avoid seeing things that would ensnare your heart. This has become harder in our times. I have come to see that there are 3 areas in which our technology temps us in a specific way today. First, there is the temptation to waste time- to be constantly engaged in entertainment. Second, there is the temptation towards gambling. Online gaming and sports betting is growing at an exponential rate. And third is in the area of pornography – sexually explicit pictures and videos have found their ways into every corner of society. In a recent poll, it was stated that 65% of Christian men look at pornography at least once a month. Even 1/3 of Christian women confessed to struggling with pornography. So this is a real challenge for us today as we consider the 7th commandment. To say nothing about pre-marital sex and the actual act of adultery within a marriage. Our society is sex crazed, and pleasure addicted. In this context we hear these words- you shall not commit adultery. This is not a new sin- we find it already in Numbers 25 when the people of Israel whored after the daughters of Moab. Even further back in Genesis 6 where the sons of God polluted themselves with the daughters of men. So today we consider the 7th commandment with this theme: Jesus Christ demands the purity of those whom He purchased.

**I. The Foundation of this Command**

In our first point, we consider the foundation of this command. Why are we called to avoid adultery? Well, in a creational sense, God has made man and woman to live together in marriage as a husband and wife. Marriage is creational and divine ordinance. Marital union was established at creation- God created them male and female, and for this reason a husband shall leave his parents and be joined to his wife. Thus the two shall become one flesh as we find outlined in Gen. 2. Jesus echoes this in Matthew 19 where divorce is restricted by God to a situation where adultery has first taken place. This is because God hates divorce. Divorce did not exist from the beginning. Now to be clear, the Bible teaches that marriage is designed to be a lifelong union between one man and one woman. But adultery is such a significant attack on this union that Jesus gives adultery as a ground for Biblical divorce. In other words, although God hates divorce and God created marriage to be life long- it is also true that adultery is such a significant event that is ruptures what God has brought together! Adultery drives a wedge between a husband and wife- pollutes the marriage bed if you will- by introducing a 3rd member into a sacred, covenant union. So the significance of this sin is evidenced by the fact that this sin is given as a ground for divorce! It undermines the very nature of marriage, and it tears the very fabric of this union. So marriage is designed to be the only acceptable and even honorable place for romantic and sexual intimacy. To be clear, sex is only safe inside the bonds of marriage! To engage in sex outside of marriage is compared to taking life coals into your lap- or like walking bare foot on hot coals! You are going to be burned- your life is going to be set on fire! Added to this creational context- that marriage was made and instituted by God in the beginning- there is a second foundation for this command as well. Marriage is given as a unique picture of Christ and the church. In Eph. 5 we find that the instructions given to husbands and wives are built upon the fact that marriage is uniquely designed to be a picture of Christ and His bride the church. Husbands are to reflect Christ and wives are to reflect the church- as Paul teaches in Eph. 5:32- this is mystery because marriage refers to Christ and the church. So the marriage union is designed to reflect a greater/ higher and spiritual union. The covenant bond between man and woman reflects the bond that Christ has established between himself and His bride! So marriage is a picture to the world- that points us all to Christ and our responsibility to live for Him and submit to Him! Stated negatively, a bad marriage speaks lies about Christ and His church! A broken marriage slanders the name of Christ- because Christ will never break His covenantal bond to the church! So the reason that this commandment is so important is because it is built upon our creational identity and our redeemed identity! Next, lets return to our reading from I Cor. 6. Here we find additional foundations for this commandment. I Cor. 6:18- we are to avoid sexual sins because sexual sins are unique. Sexual sins enslave the body- to live in sexual sin is to destroy your body! To be clear- sexual sins are uniquely addictive and destructive! They corrupt and mar that which has been made in God’s image- you are sinning against your own body. Like piercing your own hand with nail- you are hurting yourself! These sexual sins are done to your own flesh- you are not only hurting others you are hurting yourself- like branding your own skin! Added to that, your body is not yours alone! Your body is also a temple of the Holy Spirit- I Cor. 6:19. Sexual sins pollute the temple where God dwells- making dirty where the Spirit lives- which is a scandalous thing! And still one more- your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and your body has been purchased by Jesus Christ! I Cor. 6:20- you were bought at a price! Jesus Christ paid for your body as well as your soul! Your body has been paid for- you are not free to do with your body as you see fit! You are not your own possession! You are not free to pollute or stain your flesh with these sexual sins- because your body already has a new master and owner! Jesus owns your body- and would you take something that Jesus owns- something in which the Spirit lives- and join it to prostitutes or pollute it with adultery? Surely not! So as you can see, there are many reasons why we need to take this commandment serious! You shall not- you must not commit adultery!

**II. Avoiding Sexual Sins**

So then, lets continue by looking at various sins that we are to avoid. Sexual sins are a very large category. In forbidding adultery- as QA 109 puts it, God is forbidding all unchaste and unholy actions, desires, thoughts and looks. Jesus says this very thing in Matthew 5:28- were a lusting look is akin to adultery committed in the heart. So which sins are in the view of this command? Anything that pollutes the body or taints the mind. Not only the actual act of adultery- not only the act of sex outside the bonds of marriage. But anything that excites the sexual flesh outside the bonds of marriage. Either your acceptance of that excitement from others- or your tempting of others as well. So how you dress- and what kind of clothing you look at on others- is included. What you read- what you think about- and what things your eyes look at. But specifically, this week, we need to focus on the sin of pornography. It is so easy to access and it is all around us. Any pictures or videos that show scandalous actions are to be hated, rejected and fled from! So is pornography a problem today? Yes? Does God view it as a breaking of the 7th commandment? Yes! It is also safe to say that almost all of us have been tempted in this area! Even if you are not looking for it- pornography finds you! Seductive billboards- unwanted adds- even the books that we read have inappropriate relationships in them. Even this past month, I have had multiple people reveal to me their own struggles with pornography. So what are we to do? Well, Job made a covenant with his eyes- he was committed to avoiding a look at young woman in a lustful way. We need to take concreate steps to keep our eyes and minds pure. From downloading an app like Covenant Eyes- to hold us accountable on our cell phones. To avoiding certain kinds of movies where these kinds of images will be found. To encouraging our daughters to dress appropriately. Together we have to fight the good fight in this area. It is not easy- but Jesus said in Matthew 5 that we have to be willing to pluck out our eye- if you eye causes you to sin, you have to be dedicated to holiness even at great cost. It is painful to get rid of the thing that temps you or tempts others- but we have to learn how to control our own bodies. To take steps to do what we can to pursue holiness in this realm! And I also want to be clear- sexual sin are not unforgivable sins. These sins too can be forgiven- and you can be set free from slavery to flesh! So not only are we to avoid certain things- we are also to pursue a life of purity.

**III. Pursuing a Life of Purity**

So in our last point we consider the life of purity that we are called to pursue. QA 108 puts it- we are to live a descent and chaste life! For all the sins and thoughts that we are to avoid, we must replace them with actions and desires that are holy! Putting to death sins- but coming alive in the image of Christ! So to the married I say this- keep the marriage bed holy and undefiled. As Heb. 13:4 says- marriage is to be honored by all. One of the best defenses against adultery is a strong marriage- but added to that remember that Job made a covenant with his own eyes. Yes, take pleasure in the wife of your youth as Prov. 5 puts it- pursue a strong, happy and satisfied marriage. But individually, we are all called to pursue chastity and purity! A strong marriage is one part of this equation- but not the whole thing. Individually, we all have to be committed to a descent, holy life! To be clear, sex can be an idol to both the single and the married persons. Just because you are married does not mean that you have a proper view of sex! Those who are married must guard their marriage- and guard their hearts. Not allowing anyone else to take the place of their spouse- nor allowing their minds to fascinate on or pursue these kind of relations with others. So open communication must be maintained in the marriage- and boundaries set up that guard against improper relations with others. Even as the qualification for church office make clear- the men of the church are to be a one-woman man. Eyes and minds that resist evil and do good!

And for the single person, you also must pursue piety and purity! Let me give you a few practical points- hard work with your hands is a benefit. Physical labor and exercise help to correct the wandering mind. Fill your mind with things above- in addition to prayer, listen to godly music! Don’t neglect the means of grace- be consistent with God’s people. Take up a beneficial hobby or volunteer with some ministry! Just as idle hands are said to be the devil’s workshop- so an idle mind is ripe for impure thoughts! As I Tim. 4 encourages- set an example for others in your faith, love and purity. Treat other women with respect- as a sister or mother in the faith.

As we close, this past week I was speaking with a friend of mine who told me what he told his sons- pornography will destroy you! It is a sin that ensnares and deceives- it affects the body and destroys the mind. If you think you stand, watch out! Be on your guard against sexual sins- for our God has said- you shall not commit adultery! Jesus Christ demands the purity of those whom He purchased. Our God calls us to set an example to others in our purity- and one clear way that we can distinguish ourselves from the world is in our sexual purity. Your marriage- or your daily walk- says a lot about Christ and His church! So may we all strive to be holy- in our conduct and in our desires- because the God who calls us and lives within us is a holy God!