

LD 41; Mt. 19:1-12; Heb. 13:1-4; Committing Adultery I. The Foundation of this Command II. Avoiding all Unchastity III. Pursuing Purity

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, marriage is the first institution created by God. Marriage precedes the state- and even the relationship between parent and child. Of all the human relationships, the bond and union between husband and wife is the closest. After the command to protect the life of fellow man as we considered a few weeks ago- the family once again comes into view. It has been often said, as the family goes so goes the nation. A society that undermines the family will be lawless as we saw a few weeks ago. But this week we will see that a society that flaunts sexual sins is nigh to destruction! Jude 1:7 presents Sodom and Gomorrah as an example of what happens to a city that indulges in sexual immorality. No society can long endure a loose view of sex. Sexual immorality was a key factor in the fall of Egypt, Babylon, Greece, and Rome. What does that say about our society? As we come to the seventh commandment this morning, we will see that this command deals with sexual perversion in general and marriage in specific. We consider this theme: Jesus Christ commands the honoring of marriage as marriage points us to Him.

I. The Foundation of this Command

In our first point we consider the foundation of this command. Not only is life itself a gift from God, but a life shared with fellow human beings is a gift from God. It was not good for man to be alone- and God has seen fit to use marriage to bring about the extension and expansion of the human race. God could have simply created a world that was populated by many people, but He chose to use the family- marriage in specific- to be the vehicle by which this world would be populated. So marriage is a gift from God given to humanity- a gift we received before the fall. Although it is true that marriage has been tainted and stained by the fall- there is conflict and struggle in marriage which was not there at first- the fact remains that marriage as an institution was a gift from God in the garden before the fall into sin. So the foundation of marriage is firmly set by God- marriage is not some evolutionary

development or human invention. Marriage is not some social construct or contract that was thought up by man to keep people in line. No- it is a gift from God and as such God is sovereign over marriage. As we read in Gen. 2:24- God made them one flesh. He made them one. God is at work in the act of marriage. As Jesus repeats in Mt. 19:6- What God has joined together, let no man separate. To mess with marriage is to taint the work of God's hand. God designed marriage in the beginning to be blessing to those who enter into it. Bringing Adam from not good to now very good- because he received Eve as his own flesh and blood. Eve complements and fulfills Adam in his work. Marriage is also designed by God to be monogamous- between one man and one woman until death parts them. As we read in Mt. 19- Male and female they were created- and the two became one flesh as God joins them. Marriage is designed by God as an exclusive union. The man and the woman are bound to one another until death. This puts them in the closest of human relationships- more intimate and binding even than parent to child as the children leaves their parents when they are joined in marriage. It is to be permanent- only death can separate. In other words, divorce should not be word that is thrown around lightly in a Christian marriage! This also means that both partners in the marriage can enjoy a great sense of stability. Both members have pleaded their fidelity and are committed to be faithful to the other. The covenant vows that have been taken are solemn and binding. Both husband and wife have said- I am yours and you are mine! None can compete with you- none can take your place- none is fairer in my eyes. This provides the context for not only stability, but also comfort and joy. The benefit of this kind of marriage is mutual support, joy and encouragement. But why is marriage so important? Well, we as Christian not only remember that marriage is an institution ordained by God before the fall, marriage is also unique in that Jesus uses marriage to be a living parable of His love. In John 3 and in Rev. 22 we learn that Jesus calls Himself the groom while the church is called the bride of the Lamb. Marriage is unique in its way of pointing to Christ's love for the church and the churches love for Christ her husband- as we also see applied in Eph. 5. How husbands and wives live together is a dim reflection of our calling

to love, cherish and submit to Christ our head. So if we corrupt this institution- if we mess with marriage- we are in fact destroying the image! When a husband is harsh with his wife- we have to ask- would Christ ever be harsh with us? When a wife forsakes her husband- we ask- would the church ever forsake Christ? In this way, the Christian marriage remains one of clearest illustrations of Christ and His churches covenantal bond.

II. Avoiding all Unchastity

So far we have looked at the foundation, now lets press on to the specifics. Since marriage is so important, God commands us to protect and defend our marriage and the marriages of others. We do this by abstaining from sexual immorality. As I Thes. 4:3 puts it- each of you should know how to control your own body in holiness and honor; not in the passions of lust. So the contrast is set between self control and slavery to the passions of lust. So when our commandment reads, you shall not commit adultery, the first layer is that of actual adultery. A person who is married shall not have sexual relations with another. But added to that, we would add fornication. That is having any sexual relations before marriage. But we can go even further- as our QA 108 puts it- God condemns all unchastity. That includes our actions, words, thoughts and desires as QA 109 explains. We are to avoid anything that would pollute our bodies since we have been united to Christ by faith. So to be specific- we are to be careful what we read and what we look at. Pornography used to be reserved for dirty magazines- but no more. Sexually explicit videos are constantly streaming- even watching vines or memes is dangerous business. You cannot unsee something. Job made a covenant with his eyes- not to look at a maiden with lusty desire. But we are also to avoid provoking these thoughts and desires in others. How we act, speak and how we dress- should reflect our identity. So we want to avoid doing anything that would cause our neighbor to sin as well. One illustration of this was seen on the news a few weeks back. At the Pride party on the lawn of the White House of all places. Where men and women were exposing themselves- naked people on the White House lawn! But closer to home, we all need to be mindful of

others. We do not want to cause another little one to fall because of our attire or actions. For those of you who are dating- be very careful. The kind of attention your boyfriend/ girlfriend seeks is not likely to change after marriage. How they act before marriage and while dating gives you insight on how they will act after marriage. What kind of a partner are you looking for? What traits or behaviors will you seek? Someone who focusses primarily on the external things will almost always be a self centered and un-supporting spouse. Be careful who you date- is this person someone who will be a helper that is suitable? Someone you want to raise a family with? Are they spiritually compatible? A pretty face or strong arms will not be enough to keep a marriage together! Getting back to our topic at hand- God protects marriage. The fact is, adultery is a heinous sin. God hates divorce, but adultery is such a serious sin that it given as a ground for divorce. As Jesus taught in Matthew 19:9- whoever divorces his wife except on the grounds of adultery and marries another commits adultery. Adultery is so serious that it breaks the fabric of the marriage- it puts a wedge between the two and separates what God has united. As it was also stated I Cor. 16- sexual sins are committed to the body- inside your own body- the very body that Jesus has purchased with His blood. Or as Heb. 13:4 warns us, God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. As God's people we must guard our eyes and minds- and our bodies! The body was not made for sexual immorality- to be polluted and enslaved to the lusts of the flesh. We live in a sex crazed world- everything is sexualized- the profane is in our faces. So may we all seek to put to death the sins that remain- but also come alive in the image of Christ!

III. Pursuing Purity

In our last point, we look at how we are to grow in holiness when it comes to purity. Our text from Heb. 13:4 starts by saying- let marriage be honored among all and the marriage bed be undefiled. So the positive of this commandment is to honor marriage and keep the act of marriage pure. Your marriage must be protected, defended, rejoiced in and celebrated! But not only yours- you are also to honor the marriages of others by not stealing the spouse of others with your actions, looks or thoughts. For those

who are married, you are to cultivate a positive marriage. Honoring marriage means that seek to have a good marriage- to be loyal and supportive of your spouse. As a simple application, husband you need to date your wives. Take the out- honor them as the weaker vessel. Do not be harsh with them- but rather lovingly serve them. As I Peter 3:7 says, live with your wives in an understanding way. And to the wives, submission is not a dirty word. To love and submit to your husband is to follow and support their leadership. To encourage them in their roles and responsibilities. As I said before, Christian families are one of the most visible ways in which we can be set apart from this world. The goal of your marriage is to glorify God as you lovingly serve one another. This positive command applies also to those who are not married. As our QA 108 puts it rightly- that I live a decent and chaste life both within or outside of marriage. Married or single, in other words, I am to be pure. The fact is, not everyone is married or even wants to be married. Some have received the spirit of singleness which is a gift- enabling that person to be dedicated to God and the church in a unique way. But the challenges to be pure in this regard are just as challenging for you. Pornography- selfishness and self focussed sexual expression- is very tempting and addictive. Flee from it- put it to death! Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit- meant for worship- to be pure! You are not meant for sexual immorality. So seek to use your strength to bless and serve the body of Christ!

To conclude, the institution of marriage has been polluted and defiled in our society. But it was not like that in the beginning- for God made them male and female- and God made them one- and God called this marriage very good. Physical, material, emotional and spiritual blessings are normally found within the bounds of a godly marriage. Jesus Christ commands the honoring of marriage as marriage points us to Him. So let us all seek to live a descent and chaste life- holy and free from sexual immorality- because our God is holy!