

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

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"The Seventh Command"
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The seventh command, of the ten God gave to Israel at Mt. Sinai, states: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." This command, as also the others, is so very clear and simple. It is sinful man, seeking to evade the clear teaching of the command, who has sought to alter, amend, and reinterpret this Word of God.

The seventh command treats of a subject that at one time was considered rather "delicate" in refined society. It was concerned with "sex"---and "sex" was not mentioned publicly. Today, however, the situation is entirely different. Sex is not only publicly mentioned, but deviate sex and perverted sex are made subjects for man's entertainment. Sins of sex, once only mentioned within the closets, now are openly approved and recommended.

This command, therefore, is one also which must be proclaimed. Obedience is required---however, not merely an obedience which is outward, but that which proceeds from a regenerated heart. One must not simply obey the command as did the Pharisees of Jesus' day, but adultery must be rooted out of the thought and heart. Jesus points this out when He declared that to look at a woman and lust for her is to commit adultery.

The child of God obeys this command again, not to earn before God, but to express gratitude to God. Obedience is the fruit of the new life of Christ which is worked in one's heart.

But perhaps you might consider the seventh command to be outdated: a remnant of Victorian or Puritan morality of past ages. That seems to be the consensus of opinion in our day. Nothing seems to be regarded as "adultery" anymore. One hears rather of "alternate life styles." Or there is an emphasis on an individual's "rights"---to do also as he pleases in the marriage relationship. In the eyes of such, the seventh command becomes simply an attempt to place illegal and improper restraint on an individual. One can find all kinds of reasons that this traditional command does not and should not apply today. Those who teach it, are trying only to place restrictions on the freedom of another. So man argues.

Yet it must be clearly understood: the command is given first in order that the perfections and holiness of the Almighty God might be evident. Because God is holy and pure, therefore also He requires that His creatures reflect likewise that purity. Because God does not change, therefore His command concerning purity does not change either. The command is not "dated;" it is as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago.

God has been pleased to reveal His own purity and holiness outside of Himself. When God first created Adam and Eve, He made them good and without sin. He formed them that they might reflect God's righteousness. There was no question but that Adam, before he fell into sin, lived in perfect purity.

But a change took place when Adam refused to continue in obedience. Deliberately he divorced himself from that perfect relationship with God, and walked now in a way of unholiness and impurity. The corruption in this world had its beginning at that time---for when man separates himself from the righteous God, he will also walk impurely with his neighbor.

Yet God sent Christ that His people might be restored to that purity which had existed before Adam's fall into sin. Christ, through His perfect and complete work of redemption on the cross, obtained for Himself the church which is identified in Scripture as His bride. That "bride" is dedicated to her "husband" Jesus Christ. The church, the bride of Christ, desires also to reflect proper purity and righteousness while it exists here on the earth. The seventh commandment is the Word of God which directs Christ's bride in a pure life on the earth.

If we can see that the seventh command, then, is based on God's holiness, then we can also understand that it remains in force today-- and is as appropriate now as it has ever been. It is not given to make man's life a bit more difficult, but it is given in order that people of God may know and understand what God requires of them in their godly walk.

Transgression of the seventh commandment is at bottom the violation of the relationship which man formerly enjoyed with God. When Adam in Paradise listened to the lie of the devil, at that moment he walked in the impurity of adultery. The service to the idol, the listening to the lie of the devil, according to Scripture, is "adultery," that is, having another for one's "husband" than the living God. That sin is still in the world. Wicked man will not have God to be "husband." These continue in spiritual adultery. The prophet of the Old Testament, Hosea, makes that strikingly plain in his prophecy.

And the inevitable result of spiritual adultery, is that man lives in an adulterous relationship with his neighbor as well. Nor will that situation change--unless there is a real and spiritual conversion to God. The problems of society arise not because of poverty, nor racial injustice, nor because of sexual inequality, but because of a wicked and impenitent heart.

What are the violations of this command which must be condemned? First, and most obviously the marriage relationship must be maintained. Do you understand what that means? God created one wife for one husband, and, says Scripture, these two became ONE flesh (Genesis 2:24). ONE flesh is, by very definition, indivisible. Jesus made that plain also in Luke 16:18 when He said, "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery." Though many attempt to amend and alter this teaching of Christ, it is as plain as the sun in the heavens that marriage is not dissoluble. This is evident further when Ephesians 5:31-32 portrays marriage as a picture of the beautiful relationship between Christ and His church. Marriage is for life. And although Christ appears to teach one ground for divorce, adultery, yet He makes plain in His Word that the marriage tie essentially remains intact. In God's eyes, two remain husband and wife as long as these live on the earth.

Yet divorce is not only common among the worldly people (in some cases one of two marriages end with divorce), but it is becoming increasingly popular within the churches. All sorts of grounds are given for divorce. Wherever there is "incompatibility" of whatever sort, there divorce is advocated. In fact, many states simply allow for a "no-fault" divorce. The bond of marriage is no longer regarded as permanent. Still it must be taught that most divorce and all remarriage of divorced parties is violation of the seventh command. Within the scope of that truth, the Christian must also resolve marital problems. His option is not to divorce, but to be reconciled with his wife (husband) in Christ. We can send you more detailed information on this teaching if you write for it.

The command forbids what is sometimes called the "alternate life

styles." One sees this sin where two live together without the benefit of marriage. All kinds of reasons are given for the practice, yet Scripture insists that it is living in adultery. There is also the sin of homosexuality. The sin is growing and becoming more open--coming out of the closet, it is said. Laws are rewritten granting "gay rights." Even sculptures are being made and placed in prominent cities, dedicated to the homosexual and these portray the togetherness of the homosexual. This is often condoned with the plea that one has no control over his sexual orientation. Perhaps the argument comes down to this: if God made me this different way, I can do it. Yet I would ask: does the kleptomaniac have the right to continue to steal? Does a hardened murderer have the "right" to continue to kill? The point is that man may not use his feelings and desires to condone sinful deeds. All of these terrible sins are as evil today as they were in the time of Sodom and Gomorrah when God destroyed those cities for sins similar to those committed in our own day. Repent, says Scripture.

Also, in our country, under the guise of freedom of the press, there is the growing evil of pornography. This is no more the "under the counter" stuff of a few years ago. Today it is big business. It is found on the shelves in the stores of the land. It is the theme of movie and television. It is available to the youngest of children. Sex is portrayed in all of its deviant forms. There are few, if any, restrictions anymore. This "freedom of the press" is used to pervert the minds of the young, to titillate the thoughts of those older. One hardly considers this to be sin anymore. If one deplores it, or strongly condemns it, he is accused of "censuring" the press. But let it be heard: this is sin of the grossest sort. It is violation of the seventh command. This violation is very really tearing apart the very fabric of our society. Unrestricted corruption of our day can only result in sad consequences in our generation and the next.

There is also the matter of dress. Today, it seems, dress is designed exactly to promote lustful thoughts. That is evident on the beaches of the country--but can be seen in the fashion shops. We must include with this too, the lustful thought. He who lusts after another in the heart, has already committed adultery (Matthew 5:28).

It is rather ironic, then, that we hear so much today about "sex education." Young children are to be taught the basics of sex, the ways of preventing pregnancies, the dangers of sexually transmitted diseases--while the morality of all this, the teaching of the seventh command, is ignored. Rather the answer must be that parents must instruct their children in the morality of Scripture--showing by word and especially by example how the Christian is to behave toward another. Only on the basis of God's Word can a proper morality be established in the area of sexual relations.

The seventh command, for the child of God, has a positive element definitely. There is the truth that he must walk in holiness over against the Sovereign God. He is called to honor all of God's Word and obey His law. One is to do that not only in confession, but also in his walk. It is one thing to acknowledge God's Word with the lips, but another to obey it from the heart. He is our God and Guide Whom we must serve all the days of our lives. And in obedience to this command, we are to hold His Word properly; we are to maintain the truth in all of its beauty and fulness. One may not compromise with that. Therefore it is so important too where one worships God and to which church one belongs.

Thus do we walk in thankfulness for that deliverance which Christ has obtained for us. We desire to please Him now and eternally.

But also obedience to the seventh command involves a godly relationship with the neighbor. We are not to compromise the important truths of Scripture--because everyone seems to do so. We are not to lower our standards for marriage, for sex, for entertainment. We continue rather to serve God by observing His commands.

First, in marriage husband and wife are to walk in proper love toward the other. When problems arise, and so often they do, these are to be resolved properly in the light of the teachings of Scripture. Divorce is not the solution. The Christian marriage must reflect the relationship between Christ and His church. Your marriage must reflect that too.

And we are to flee from the corruptions of the wicked. We have no "right" to enjoy the perversions of pornography, nor laugh at the filthy stories and jokes so often repeated. We cannot condone premarital sex nor other "alternate life styles." We are to label these "sin." And we ourselves seek to walk purely. We are not to condemn others while we ourselves find pleasure in the lusts of the flesh. We are to walk in that straight and narrow way which leads to life.

That way is so often hard--especially because we then encounter opposition. Many mock the position of the Word of God in this regard. Many denounce its teachings. The law of the land is even such that we can be fined and imprisoned in some cases while maintaining what this command teaches. But by grace let us hold fast to the Word of God. Let us not waver nor turn aside. God is Pure. Let His people, then, reflect that purity in their daily lives and in their relationships with one another.