
The 7th Law of Life - part 1 of 2

"You shall not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14).

The Order of the Commandments

We come now to the seventh commandment, "You shall not commit adultery." Before entering into a more minute consideration of it, it will be worth while to consider its place among the ten. Did it ever occur to the reader that the order of the commandments is not accidental? It certainly cannot be, and there must surely be a lesson for us in their arrangement. We may not know all that there is in it, but it will certainly repay study.

The first reveals God in His essential attribute as the Saviour; "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me" (Ex. 20:1-3). He is the only God, because He is the only One who can save. "I, even I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior" (Isa. 43:11).

The second naturally grows out of this, for "they have no knowledge, who carry the wood of their carved image, and pray to a god that cannot save" (Isa. 45:20).

Then we have, in the third, the assurance and the power of God's name. We are not to bow down to graven images, which are nothing, but to take His name, and we have the assurance that we shall not take that for nothing, or "in vain." It supplies all that He Himself is.

The fourth commandment reveals the name, "for Your wondrous works declare that Your name is near" (Ps. 75:1). It shows the Lord at work and at rest; and when we see His works understandingly, we learn His ways, and enter into His rest.

From the contemplation of God as Creator, we are now brought to consider Him as Father. He is the Universal Father, and human parenthood is the revelation of God working through the flesh. From the honor due to our parents, we are to learn the reverence due to God, the Supreme Father of all.

As the life transmitted from father to son is God's life, the sixth commandment is designed to guard its sacredness.

Then we come to the seventh commandment, which also emphasizes the sacredness of life in showing that it must be kept pure and unadulterated. God's life is simplicity itself. His is seen in the most common things by which He conveys life to us, as the air and water. The Apostle Paul says: "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in

Christ" (2 Cor. 11:3). The sin of Eve was the first case of adultery, and all the specific acts of adultery since that time have been but outgrowths from that. **She left the simple for the complex**; the straight way of righteousness and life, for the maze of sin and death.

The Beginning of Evil

It is not necessary for us to dwell upon the grosser forms of the violation of this commandment; they are generally regarded not only as sin, but as crimes, as offenses against respectability. Whether the gross violation of this commandment is worse than the violation of the other commandments God alone knows; but one thing is sure, and that is that the "commandment is exceedingly broad." People generally regard it as prohibiting the act of sin, whereas it deals specially with the beginning of it.

Christ's words in the sermon on the mount, show the spirituality of the commandment: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:27, 28). Christ was not adding anything to the commandment which He Himself had given; He was revealing the breadth and depth of it. His language is unqualified and unlimited. **The commandment is violated by an impure thought or look, not simply upon a woman who is not one's wife, but upon any women whatsoever. The lustful thought is adultery.** From the commandment as magnified by Christ's statement of it, we see that adultery may exist even within the marriage relation, for that relation does not sanctify lustful thought and impure action.

The Institution of Marriage

God Himself instituted marriage in the beginning. When God made man, He made him male and female, and gave them dominion, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28). This was even before the Sabbath was given. On the sixth day, God created man, the last of all His works. The animals were all brought before him for him to name, but among them he found none that could be a companion for him. So God took from his side a rib, which He built into a woman, and brought to him, and, recognizing his counterpart, "And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Gen. 2:23, 24).

It was after the union of the man and the woman had been blessed by God, and the command to be fruitful had been given, that "God saw everything that He had made,

and indeed it was very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day" (Gen. 1:31).

Then came the Sabbath, the seventh day, which God blessed for man's good. **These two institutions, marriage and the Sabbath, come from Eden, and belong to Eden.** In marriage, even as in the Sabbath, we have that which, rightly understood, brings us closer to God in His working than anything else.

True marriage brings men into close connection with the Lord, making them partners with Him in His work. In it we have the revelation of the mystery of Christ in His union with the church. The Apostle Paul, after quoting the words found in the second chapter of Genesis, "the two shall become one flesh," adds, "this is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:31, 32). And he says that husbands should love their wives, as Christ also loved the church, and that the husband should nourish and cherish the wife even as the Lord the church. "For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones" (v. 30). Marriage is designed to teach us of Christ's saving union with us; but the institution has been so perverted, that as a general thing it is not a true revelation of Christ. We must learn first from Christ what marriage ought to be, and then it in turn will reveal to us more of the Lord than we could know without it.

The Patient Self-Control of Love

There is a world of instruction for us in the statement that "even Christ did not please Himself" (Rom. 15:3). He loved the church, and gave Himself for it. Yet He does not force Himself upon any; He has an infinite and continuous longing for the response to His love, yet He is patient and forbearing. He stands at the door and knocks, letting us know that He loves us with an everlasting love, but He will do nothing without our consent. He will not press His attentions upon us. His long-suffering, forbearing love, always pleading, and yet waiting, is the most marvelous in the universe. **Whoever knows the love of Christ for him, will know the tender considerateness that ought to be shown to a wife.**

Arranging a Marriage

In order to understand the truth about anything, we must go to the beginning of it. When the disciples asked Jesus a question concerning marriage and divorce, referring to certain regulations that had been given by Moses, Jesus said that these were because of the hardness of their hearts, "but from the beginning it was not so" (Matt. 19:8); and then He quoted the record in Genesis.

We often read in the papers that "a marriage has been arranged" between certain parties. Now if we would know exactly how a marriage ought to be arranged, we must go to the record of those which God has planned and controlled. When God would provide a companion for Adam, He made a woman, and "brought her to the man." **There was no mistake here; the pair were made for each other, and both recognized the fact, and were satisfied.**

Another striking example is found in the case of the marriage of Isaac. He was the child of promise, the heir of the promise made to Abraham, and his life was in harmony with this fact. He was forty years old, yet even at that age he did not choose a wife for himself. Even professed Christians have not been ashamed to indulge in cheap wit at the expense of Isaac, saying they should not like to have their parents choose for them; but it must be remembered that **Abraham did not choose a wife for Isaac. God Himself did the choosing.**

Read the beautiful story in the twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis. Abraham's tried servant, who had the same faith as his master, was sent in search of the one whom God had chosen for Isaac. When the servant said, "perhaps the woman will not be willing to follow me to this land," Abraham replied, "The Lord before whom I walk will send His angel with thee, and prosper thy way" (Gen. 24:5, 40). And so it was. And after traveling a long distance, the servant stopped at a well, and prayed to the Lord to show him which of the damsels that came to draw water was the one for his master's son. He did not pray aloud, but spoke in his heart, and even before he had finished praying, the sign which he had asked was granted.

The whole matter was arranged by the Lord, and the relatives of Rebecca, as well as Rebecca herself, recognized the fact. They said, "The thing comes from the Lord; we cannot speak to you either bad or good. Here is Rebekah before you; take her and go, and let her be your master's son's wife, as the Lord has spoken" (vv. 50, 51). And Rebecca, when asked if she would go at once, said, "I will go." Then the return journey was made, "and the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her" (vv. 66, 67).

"Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise" (Gal. 4:28). Yes; also as Adam was, we are new creatures. Therefore in those two instances we have a picture of true Christian marriage, of such marriage as will be an effective safeguard against the violation of the seventh commandment.

Who Will Choose?

But someone will say, "How unsatisfactory, to have no courtship, no love-making, beforehand." Well, satisfaction all one's life after marriage is far better than a little brief satisfaction beforehand. "Courtship" and "love-making" are terms that should not be used among Christians. **Love cannot be made**, for it is of God, and has existed from eternity. We can only allow Him to shed it abroad in our hearts by His Holy Spirit. Whoever attempts to make love can produce at the best only a counterfeit. And where God is allowed to direct and indicate His choice, there is no necessity for courtship. We hear much about heresy, which means, choosing for one's self. God is the only One who has the wisdom and the right to choose. He who chooses for himself, whether in the matter of marriage or anything else, is a real heretic. Such a course shows distrust of God; it is in reality a violation of the first commandment.

When the Scriptures say that the woman was created for the man, we are not to understand merely that women in general were created for men, but that as in the case of Adam and Eve, God who knows the end from the beginning, and who writes our members in His book even before they are formed, and who has a definite purpose for each individual that is born, provides for each man a help meet for him, and will as certainly bring the two together if they will have the patience to wait, as He brought Eve to Adam, and Rebecca to Isaac. And if they are both in Him, they will recognize His choice, and find their happiness in it.

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When all the animals; were brought before Adam, for him to name them, he could not find among them a help fit for him, but when God brought Eve to him he recognized her as his complement (his completing). Suppose now that out of the thousands of women that a man may see, he chooses for himself one that was not made for him, who cannot fill out that which is lacking in his life, and who is not a help fitted for him. Is it not plain that the mistake which he makes is of the same kind, though less in degree, that Adam would have made if he had chosen one of the creatures that first passed before him, instead of waiting for the one whom God made for him? This is the reason why there is so much of the animal, and so little of the spiritual in many marriages.

I would that I could speak confidentially and personally to every young person whose life is all before him, and who has it in his power to accept happiness at the hands of

God, or to make shipwreck of it. There are infinite possibilities before every one, when God is allowed to order the life. Contrast, for example, the uncertainties, the doubt, the uneasiness, the misunderstandings, heart-burnings and jealousies, the fear that one may be mistaken, the wonder if the other is sincere and constant, with the calm inexpressible joy, and quiet restful peace that comes when God's choice is recognized. The two will know that God has brought them together as surely as they know that He is their Creator. It is a common saying that the course of true love never runs smooth; but when two persons love in the Lord, their trust in each other is the same as their trust in God, and the certainty of their mutual love is the same as their certainty of sins forgiven.

The Hidden Working of God

From the microscopic world we may learn a wonderful lesson. The careful and patient observer sees under his glass hundreds of simple cells, either of plants or animals, all in constant motion. There is as much definiteness in their movements as there is in those of the thousands of men that we see passing and passing again on the streets. Watch one of them, and you may see it in its coarse approach very closely to another one, but instead of touching they separate instantly, as when two similar magnetic poles are brought together. But watch it further, and you will see it come close to another, and these two by common impulse will join and become one.

Is this accidental? If it were, why did not the first two join when they were so close together that they had to change their course in order to keep apart? No; these simple cells have no mind of their own, but God's mind directs them. In them we see God at work in His secret place; and can it be that He who guides in the union of the lowest forms of life, in bodies so small that their universe is a drop of water, will not as certainly direct in the higher creation, in beings whom He has made to rule the worlds? If in this complex being the will of the Lord is as fully done as in the simple atom, then the work will be perfect, never to be undone, for "whatever God does, it shall be forever. Nothing can be added to it, and nothing taken from it. God does it, that men should fear before Him" (Eccl. 3:14).

Working Contrary to God's Plan

Christ, referring to the beginning when God brought Eve to Adam, said, "what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mark 10:9). Man's attempt to separate that which God has joined is, according to Christ's words, the committing of adultery. Suppose then, having in view the exceeding breadth of the law, we carry this matter back to the beginning. If a man does not wait God's time to bring to him the woman whom He has designed as his counterpart, we have, if not the separating of what God has joined together, then the keeping separated of that which God had designed to join, as well as

the joining of that which God did not purpose should be joined. What else can this be but adultery? And this is one of the commonest causes of that which man recognizes as adultery. God's commandments are not directed merely against the final act of sin, but against its inception, against everything that could possibly lead to the act. "His command is everlasting life" (John 12:50), and cannot possibly have any connection whatever with death, or with anything that can end in death.

Faithfulness to God is the Safeguard against Adultery

Although we are God's offspring, He says, "I am married to you" (Jer. 3:14). Eve was Adam's offspring, yet she was married to him. So we are to recognize ourselves as united to God, channels for the stream of life from God, and are to give diligence, to preserve that stream uncontaminated. The committing of adultery, the perversion of that life, is primarily a sin against God, so much so that any injury to any person is eclipsed by it. David, referring to his sin, not only in taking the wife of Uriah, but in causing him to be killed, said, "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight" (Ps. 51:4). Joseph, when tempted by Potiphar's wife, reminded her of how much confidence his master rested in him, having given him absolute control of his household; and then, instead of saying, as one might expect, that he could not commit such a crime against his master, he said, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9). We have therefore only to keep God before our eyes continually, and to be loyal to Him, allowing His life to flow through us, and there will be no danger of our doing any injury to any person on earth.

The Flesh is Against the Spirit

It is true in the fullest sense that we are God's offspring, for there can be no life except from Him. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). It is evident, therefore, that God ought by right to have the prime control in the bringing of every new creature into existence. Otherwise there is a violation of the commandment. This is plain from the following Scripture: "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God?" (James 4:4). "If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15). Love of the world, union with the world, is therefore the very essence of adultery, and as such is forbidden by the commandment. Now we read that "the lust of the flesh" is of the world. **Therefore it follows that whatever is the result of carnal desire, and not the working of God's Spirit, is adultery.**

Instruments of God

Someone doubtless says: "How can it be otherwise, so long as we are in the flesh?" Very easily, if God is allowed to have His own way. He has given Christ's power over all

flesh, and "you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you" (Rom. 8:9). We are to recognize our bodies as the dwelling place of God, and all our members instruments of His righteousness. He is to be allowed to work in us both to will and to do. The unrighteous man is to forsake his thoughts, but only that God may think His thoughts in him, and he is to forsake his ways, that God may reveal His ways in him, "casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). **It is not simply on the Sabbath day, but all the time, that we are not to do our own ways, nor find our own pleasure.** Even now, in individuals, God's kingdom is to come and His will be done on earth as it is in heaven, in order that at last it may be so all over the earth.

Now it is evident that a child born of parents living thus fully joined to the Lord, would be born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. That this is possible is seen in the birth of John the Baptist; his parents were "both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the law blameless." And he was "filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb." Read also Gal. 4:22, 23: "For it is written that Abraham had two sons: the one by a bondwoman, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and he of the freewoman through promise." And again, verse 29: "But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now."

Here we see a direct contrast: one child born of the flesh, another born of the Spirit; and since all who are Christ's are Abraham's seed, and in Isaac is his seed called, it is plain that just such a birth as Isaac had is the right of every child, and is to be expected of every Christian parent. We might mention the case of Jeremiah, who was ordained a prophet of God before he was born, and others as well, to show that the cases cited are not more unique specimens.

The Power of the New Birth

If any say, "This is too high; we cannot attain to it," or, recognizing its possibility, mourn over their grievous failures, let them be comforted with the knowledge that God is able to make all grace abound, and that He does not remember the sins of our youth, but puts them away from us as far as the east is from the west. It is possible for a man to be born again, even when he is old, so that all may be heirs of God, and of Him only. **By the new birth we are delivered from all the evil inherited in the first birth, and this is the comfort that parents may have, not simply for themselves, when they think**

of their sinful heritage, but for the children who through their ignorance or self-will, may have been born after the flesh.

The commandments of God are not mere negative precepts, but positive assurances: "You shall not commit adultery." This is a promise that the stream of God's life, if we but yield to it, will flow through us undefiled, making us in all our ways perfect even as our Father in heaven is perfect. This is the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Given free course through us, it cleanses us from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, itself remaining undefiled. **For by the power of the incarnation and the resurrection of Christ, His life will, if we believe, work mightily in us to swallow up death in victory. We may then rejoice in this commandment more than in all riches, and, submitting to the everlasting life, may begin a new life, fresh and clean, and find even in this sin-cursed earth, an Eden of joy.**

The Hope of Eternity

A man makes his own surroundings, so to him who is a new creature, "old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). Now God says: "For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me," says the Lord, "So shall your descendants and your name remain" (Isa. 66:22). So God expects and provides that every child of truly Christian parents shall also be Christian, and shall live forever. It is the same as with those whose union has been brought about by Him. "They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble; for they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them" (Isa. 65:23).

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