

SEVENTH WORD OF GRACE: KEEPING COMMITMENTS

Exodus 20.14

The commandment in the Decalogue against committing adultery follows the one prohibiting murder. Alphonse Maillot cautions that despite the special horror with which the church regards adultery, it is not *the* sin of sins, *the* mistake that stands above all others. Adultery is very serious, but we must not lose sight of the other sins outlined in the commandments.

In its most original sense, the seventh commandment – “*You shall not commit adultery*” (Ex 20.14; Deuteronomy 5.18) – meant that a man, whether married or single, was prohibited from having sexual intercourse with an *engaged or married* woman. Adultery was specifically a matter of a violation of a marriage relationship.

The Old and New Testaments often reinforce the basic message of the seventh commandment.

Leviticus 18; Deuteronomy 22-23; Genesis 38.24; Leviticus 20.10; 21.9; Numbers 5.11-31; Ezekiel 23.45; Proverbs 6.32; see also Prov 5-7; Jeremiah 5.7-8; 7.9; 23.14; 29.23; Ezekiel 16.32, 38

Adultery is specifically a matter of violating, breaking or “adulterating” a covenanted marriage relationship. It violates the commitment to fidelity that was made before God.

Genesis 39.6-20; Romans 2.22; 1 Corinthians 6.9-20; 5.11

Please understand that God forgives, restores and heals people of these mistakes. God is not to be thought of as a vindictive, harsh judge. Nevertheless, adultery must be repudiated and left far behind in the Christian life.

Jesus and the Fulfillment of the Seventh Commandment

“You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.” Matthew 5.27-29

Matthew 19.1-12; Mark 10.9

The Core Message: It Is All About Relationships

The ethical discussion of adultery covers not just our sex lives but, more broadly and deeply, our relational lives – just as the ethical discussion of murder led to the broader issues of health and peace.

Adultery as an Offense Against God

“How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?” Genesis 39.9

“Against you, you only, have I sinned.” Psalm 51.4

Adultery as a Wound to Our Humanity

*But a man who commits adultery lacks judgment;
whoever does so destroys himself.*

*Blows and disgrace are his lot,
and his shame will never be wiped away.”* Proverbs 6.32-33; Proverbs 5.15-20

Relationships: Keeping Our Commitments

“How then could I do such a wicked thing sin and against God?” Genesis 39.9

GREAT SIN! GREAT GRACE!