

(Devotional #29) **Christian Liberty and the Law – The Ten Commandments:**
The 7th Commandment: The Sanctity of Marriage
(Exodus 20:14)

AND GOD SAID: *it is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him – Genesis 2:18*

THE LORD GOD *caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The LORD GOD fashioned into A WOMAN the rib which He had taken from the man, and He brought her to the man. The man said:*

*This is now bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called 'ISHAH (woman),
Because this one was taken out of 'ISH (man)*

FOR THIS REASON, *a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh – Genesis 2:21-24*

THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY – Exodus 20:14

The sign reads **Do Not Enter!** What is your reaction? If you are human, probably you are possessed with a sudden desire to enter. (*This is your Old Sin Nature at work.*) But as you approach the entrance, there may be another sign that reads **Hazardous Chemicals!** Now what are you thinking? **“Maybe I should think about this, because NOW I HAVE A REASON NOT TO ENTER.”**

Behind every biblical negative (DO NOT) ... there is a positive ... and be assured – THE NEGATIVE IS THERE TO PROTECT YOU. It exists out of God's concern for your safety.

Many of the Ten Commandments serve as **DO NOT ENTER SIGNS** for you personally and for our society. Some appear negative, but behind each is a word of grace – a positive message put there out of concern for your well-being. When you apply **'THE WORDS OF GRACE'** to your life, you will be healthier, safer, and you will enjoy life more ... and the culture in which we all live will benefit.

“Thou Shalt not Commit Adultery” is the King James translation of the 7th Commandment, and we all have a pretty accurate idea of what this commandment means on a personal level. The key term, of course, is **'ADULTERY'** – Hebrew: אִשָּׁת (pronounced 'NA'APH). It refers to a violation of the betrothal (*against your fiancée*) or the marriage-covenant (*by either party*).

Marriage is one of the Divine Institutions, and it is this institution that is protected by the 7th Commandment. Marriage is a covenant relationship by which a man and a woman commit themselves to one another spiritually, then come together physically as **'one flesh.'**

Therefore, adultery is a violation of the marriage-covenant that damages the sacredness of that covenant, and since the goal of a marriage is 'ONENESS,' a physical relationship outside of marriage violates the covenant and potentially destroys the marriage itself.

Physical intimacy within marriage is a gift from God. A number of years ago my Dad gave me a table saw for Christmas. I assembled it in the warmth of the living room, and I thought about using it there – after all, it was cold in the garage! It had a dust bag! So, the mess would be minimal! But Linda disagreed. Why? Because the living room is not a work room designed for carpentry; it is set aside for other uses. I would be **violating the design** of the living room if I used it as a work room.

Marriage, and the physical intimacy within it, are much more sacred than a living room. Adultery is prohibited because it defiles a Divine Institution established by God – **MARRIAGE**.

Beyond this, there is a theological aspect to marriage that is not commonly understood – and this *unknown truth* may be the most important part of the 7th Commandment.

Did you know the Institution of Marriage is an earthly picture of the Trinity? It is – and this theological truth is found partially in the most unlikely of places; it occurs in the middle of the clearest declaration of monotheism in Scripture ... Deuteronomy 6:4 – a passage the Jews call – **THE GREAT SHEMA‘ OF ISRAEL:**

**HEAR OH ISRAEL!
THE LORD OUR GOD!
THE LORD IS ONE!**

The Hebrew word, *shema‘* means, **HEAR! LISTEN!**

Deuteronomy 6:4 is a prayer that was offered twice daily. Jewish children are taught to recite *the shema‘* before going to sleep at night, and if you were to ask most Jews to cite a verse that most readily opposes the Doctrine of the Trinity, this is the verse they will quote ... every time. But does this verse contradict the Trinitarian Doctrine that is so central to our faith as Christians? I do not believe it does. In fact, I think *the Great Shema‘* supports our belief – and at the same time teaches us something about the sanctity of marriage.

Let’s consider the last two words of Deuteronomy 6:4 – יהוה יהוה – (pronounced *y’hwah ’ehad* = ‘*Yahweh [the LORD] is One*’). The word translated ‘ONE’ is ‘*ehad*’ – and it is this very word the rabbis claim disproves the Trinity. *The rabbis ask: “How can God be ehad (ONE) and also be THREE PERSONS at the same time”?*

Here is the answer: There are three Hebrew words that mean ‘ONE’ – and any of the three *could* have been used here (*but note: each carries a slightly different nuance*). For simplicity’s sake, we are going to consider two of these words: the word ‘*ehad*’ – (the word that **IS** used in the *shema‘*) – and one other word – ‘*yahid*’ that *could* have been used, but was **NOT**.

- The word ‘*ehad*’ is the word translated ‘ONE’ in Deuteronomy 6:4. Now if the Holy Spirit had wanted to make an irrefutable case *against the Trinity*, this was His chance because He could have used that other word – ‘*yahid*’ – but He didn’t!
- The word ‘*yahid*’ – (the word He did not use) – means: ‘*solitary one, the ONLY one, singular.*’ But He didn’t use that word, did he? No – He used ‘*ehad*’.

Now in Genesis 2:24, Moses is instructing Israel regarding marriage, and he concludes his remarks with a parenthetical statement: “***For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife – and THEY (plural) shall become ONE FLESH”*** (*singular*).

- ‘**BECOME ONE FLESH**’ is the phrase ‘*lebasar ’ehad*’ – Notice what word is used here: ‘*ehad*’ – the same word used in *the shema‘*’.

So, think about this: ‘**THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE.**’ Do the two – (the man and the woman) – **CEASE** being individuals when they marry? Or is there a special, unique **UNITY of PLURALS** created within the marriage bond? Well it is the latter. Marriage is a unity of plurals: **THE TWO BECOME ONE** – but not in the ‘*yahid*’ sense (*as a singularity*) – but in the ‘*ehad*’ sense, as two individuals, uniquely united in a mystical bond that *reflects the plurality* of the Trinity.

Now this is a problem for Jewish Theologians because:

- The one Hebrew word that means what they *claim* Deuteronomy 6:4 means – that God is a singularity – doesn't occur in any Hebrew manuscripts of Deuteronomy 6:4.
- It doesn't occur in the very verse where it should occur if that is the meaning Deuteronomy 6:4 is meant to convey.
- But what does occur there is the word that describes the unity of two persons – a man and a woman – in the marriage-covenant – ***TWO PERSONS UNITED AS ONE.***

In the 12th Century A.D., Moses Maimonides wrote 13-Articles of Faith in which **HE SUBSTITUTED *yahid* for '*ehad*'** in his treatment of *the Great Shema ' of Israel!* Apparently the most intelligent Jewish scholar of the past 900-years was concerned that '*ehad*' did not quite communicate what he *wanted* the text to say, and even more profound is the possibility that he thought it supported the claim of Christians that God is a Triune God, who sent His Son into the world to die on the cross for the sins of the world – a world that includes both Jews and Gentiles.

Genesis 2:24 occurs in close context to (1) *the creation of man and woman in God's Image*, and (2) *the Institution of Marriage*.

We believe the uniting of man and woman in marriage is a primary way God's Image as Trinity is proclaimed to the world ... and the 7th Commandment protects and preserves this revelation by forbidding any violation of marriage as established by God in the creation of man and woman.

The Divine Institution of Marriage reflects the unity of plurals within the divine nature. God has chosen how He wishes to reveal Himself, and neither you nor I nor the Supreme Court ... nor any other earthly assembly ... has the right to alter what God has set in place ... nor should we tamper with ANY of the Divine Institutions God has established to reflect His own Nature in His Creation.

Do you see why '*redefining marriage*' is wrong? Do you see why believers, who understand and respect the Scriptures, cannot support *any* redefinition of marriage, irrespective of how empathetic we may be toward those who desire to do so? We cannot do it because man cannot tamper with how God has chosen to reveal His Trinitarian Nature.

But beyond this moral law, unfaithfulness in marriage is a greater affront to God than it is to your spouse. Every time a couple comes together in marriage, God's Nature is proclaimed, and His Character is honored. But conversely, any violation of the marriage covenant denies God's very Nature and dishonors Him.

God's self-revelation as Trinity in the marriage-covenant is more convincing, more powerful, and more persuasive than any proof text you can find regarding the sanctity of marriage, and it is our fault as teachers that the Church does not understand this. If you understand this, you comprehend why any redefinition of marriage, or violation of the marriage covenant, is an abomination to God.

We have discussed the words of Genesis 2:24, but now listen to how a less familiar passage in Malachi describes the importance of the marriage-covenant: '***The LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.***' – *Malachi 2:14.* The 7th Commandment protects this covenant-relationship by preventing anyone from coming between '***the two who are one***' and by so doing, to disrupt the sanctity of the marriage-covenant.

Now God gave Adam one woman as his wife, and it is fair to draw from this fact the conclusion that a man is to have only one wife – but this commandment does not by itself explicitly prohibit polygamy. The patriarchs practiced polygamy and it's a fair question to ask, why was this allowed? The answer, though not given explicitly in Scripture, probably falls under the same explanation Jesus gave the Pharisees when they tried to trap him in Matthew 19 with the divorce question – *He said: "Because of the hardness of the human heart Moses permitted it."* In other words, the Mosaic Law permitted divorce – but it was never the divine design. I believe the same can be said of polygamy.

The 7th Commandment itself is not designed to clear up every ethical and moral question that can be asked about marriage¹. Its purpose is to protect the covenant of marriage by forbidding adultery. But in so doing, it also preserves the revelation of God's own Trinitarian Nature. When considering the seriousness of violating the marriage covenant, think beyond the damage that may be done to the family, and focus on how unfaithfulness misrepresents the very nature of God Himself.

Jesus will expand further on the subject of adultery in His Sermon on the Mount². In His sermon, Jesus reminds us that we can violate this command in mind as well as in body. One might ask, since we live in a culture that bombards us daily with numerous sexual messages ... via television, tabloids, magazines, social media, and other things we see every day ... how can we remain true to the commandment?

Here are a few suggestions:

- ***The best defense against adultery is a happy marriage.*** Philippians 2:3-4 is a guide for how we should relate to one another: instead of seeing how you can have your needs met, seek to meet the needs of your spouse, for in giving, you will receive. You will serve each other well when you delight in each other as God's gift to you.
- ***Make it a priority to think pure thoughts*** ... and make that choice moment-by-moment. This is a decision that needs to be made in advance. David erred for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was, he stayed at home when he should have been leading his troops in battle. Then he made a choice not to look away when he saw Bathsheba bathing. Do you think when David began his day he thought – "*I will commit adultery today*"? Of course not! But because of his choices, that is what happened.
- ***Center your life around Jesus.*** It is said, "*in football, the best defense is a good offense*" ... and the same is true in life. "***Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness***" ... As we follow aggressively after Jesus, we will strengthen our defenses against evil. As we turn our minds toward Jesus, memorize His Word, pray, worship, and connect with the community of faith on a consistent basis, Satan's attacks on us are frustrated.

When God said, "***Do not commit adultery,***" He did so with our well-being in mind. The 7th Commandment protects our marriages, protects our integrity, and protects our relationship with Jesus. Therefore, choose purity! Your marriage will be healthier, your integrity will stay intact, and you will honor Jesus.

¹ Broader teachings on moral purity can be found in Leviticus 18 as the proscription against involvement in Canaanite sexual practices to which Israel would be exposed in the Promised Land.

² See Matthew 5:27-28