



The Sanctity of Sex Part 2 (Deuteronomy 5:18)

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KingsWay Community Church

Thank you for the way you responded to the preached Word last Sunday. Thank you for listening eagerly. Thank you for responding humbly to the conviction of the Spirit. The Lord is always kind to address us. There are also times we experience his manifest presence in a pronounced way. Last Sunday, both during the morning service and our evening prayer meeting, the Spirit was visibly at work, giving us a hunger to pursue God, to please God, to find our joy in God, and to help one another do the same.

I'm grateful we are lingering on the 7th commandment to consider what Scripture teaches us about marriage, sex, and the faithfulness of God. Sexuality is a topic where the church has often been silent. That's a shame because God is not silent. He created sex for his glory and our good, which is why we approach this topic not with prudish fear or cultural angst, but humble gratitude and eager expectation.

He speaks about our hearts – what we think and feel, where we look for satisfaction and joy. He speaks about our lives – what we physically do with our bodies. And he speaks about the world we live in – a world that could not be more confused about what sex is, what it means, and why it matters.

Our text for this morning remains the same. Deut 5:18, “And you shall not commit adultery.” Last weekend we considered some of the biblical foundations that help us grasp why the Lord, speaking through Moses, would say such a thing. We began by recognizing sex is a holy and precious gift from God. As our Creator and Redeemer, he has every right to tell us what to do with our bodies.

But what he tells us isn't random. It's rooted in who he is. Sex is ultimately about God, not us. It's an expression of his covenant faithfulness to us as his people. That's why any form of sexual activity outside a marriage relationship between one man and one woman – what Scripture calls adultery – is so grievous. It's not just a sin against your body or your neighbor. It's an assault on the goodness and wisdom of God. And as Jesus teaches us in Matt 5, it's not just a married people problem or a behavioral problem. It's a human problem because adultery starts in the heart.

In the right context, sexual pleasure shouts of the glory of God. It's an act of worship. Twisted by sin, ripped outside of marriage, it wreaks devastating spiritual,

emotional, and physical havoc. We looked at all of those foundational concepts last week. In summary, Deut 5:18 commands us to be a people who magnify the faithfulness of God by upholding the sanctity of sex. That's the main point of the 7th commandment. So how do we do that? God's Word overflows with hope and help in this area. For the sake of time, I'll confine myself to seven exhortations.

1) MAKE JESUS YOUR GREATEST TREASURE

Sex is a good gift, but it's a terrible god. It cannot satisfy your soul. It cannot give you eternal joy. It cannot rescue, restore, or sanctify you. It cannot deliver you from death. It cannot hear your prayer, forgive your sins, strengthen your heart, quiet your fears, or give you a reason to love your enemies. It cannot do what only Jesus can do, friend.

You will never understand or enjoy the gift for what it is until you understand and enjoy the Giver for who He is. To a world that says, "Sex is god," the Lord of Host declares, "I am God and there is no other" (Isa 46:9). He is the pearl of great price. He is the treasure hidden in the field. He is the matchless one. There is no momentary tingling of nerve endings that compares to the pleasure of living in his presence and under the smile of his favor.

Don't wake up and think, "How can I get some today?" Wake up and pray, "Lord, help me to treasure you, to enjoy you, to delight in you above all else today." Make Ps 63:1-3 your cry. "O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. Because your steadfast love is better than life (infinitely better than sex), my lips will praise you."

2) CELEBRATE THE GIFT OF SEX

I want to specifically address three groups of people under this heading. The first group is those for whom sex has become something dirty, something shameful, something that immediately brings up feelings of pain and grief. Maybe you've been sexually abused. Maybe you've sexually abused someone else. Maybe you spent years running headlong after sexual sin in all its dark and twisted forms. There are many reasons.

Regardless, remember this. The fact that sexual sin hurts so much isn't a sign that sex is bad. To the contrary, it's proof that the gift is exceedingly good. The greater

the gift, the more grievous its corruption. You won't find healing by suppressing your sorrows, ignoring your desire, or running away from the whole idea. Study what Scripture reveals about the goodness of the gift. Study what Scripture says about the pain of sin. You are not alone. God knows.

He delights to draw near to cleanse you, to restore you, to patiently and gently help you to see as good what sin has ravaged. He's a Redeemer who restores what the locusts have eaten. Remember the world didn't create sex. Your flesh didn't come up with sex. Satan didn't invent sex. God did. And what God has created is very good. Marred by sin? Absolutely. But in the context for which God created it, sex is exceedingly good.

The second group are married couples. I exhort you to receive God's gift of intimacy with gratitude and joy, not begrudgingly or reluctantly. Rightly expressed, sex is a holy act of worship. Prov 5:18-19, "Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love."

But that doesn't mean it's going to be easy. Your desires and your spouse's desires may not be the same. For one reason or another, you may reach a point in your marriage where you're really not interested in sex. Maybe you would be entirely content to rarely have sex, if ever.

Friend, don't dismiss the gift or devalue the gift simply because it doesn't feel desirable, doesn't seem to work, or fails to do for you what it seems to do for others. If God sees fit to give a gift, humility leans in to receive it, even if it's hard, even if it takes work, even if it requires initiating an awkward conversation. Talk to your spouse. If you get stuck, ask another couple you trust for help. It's especially important to keep clear lines of communication open as you and your spouse grow older and physical desire and ability ebb and flow.

And take care to use God's gift unselfishly. I have spoken to spouses who wield 1 Cor 7:3 like a weapon. "The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband." Friend do not divorce Paul's admonition here from everything he says in the surrounding context about the priority of love. Do not demand sex from your spouse as a right. Do not say, "If I want it, you must give it to me in whenever I want it in whatever way I want it."

That's not love. That's selfishness. That's arrogance. God designed sex to be received as a voluntary expression of love. Humbly communicate your desires and then focus

on understanding and pursuing what would bless your spouse. Don't weaponize sex or withhold it to punish your spouse. Sex thrives in the soil of unselfishness. It dies in the soil of self-centeredness.

The third group under this heading of celebrating sex are parents. If God gives you the gift of children, work hard to give your kids an age-appropriate vision for the goodness of sex as God designed it. Your mission is not to keep them in the dark as long as possible. Your mission is to help them recognize as good what God says is good so that they grew up eager to guard and protect the gift.

Silence will make them think a subject is taboo. That's when sin thrives. Conversation, even when it's hard, even when you feel like you're stumbling over your words, even when you think, "I can't believe I just said that!" will teach your kids to look to you and God's Word for guidance in knowing what it means to worship God with their bodies.

If you feel your need for help in this area as a parent, check out Stan and Brenna Jones book series, "God's Design for Sex." It's a fantastic resource for talking with your kids about sex at various stages in their physical development. We want to celebrate the gift of because God says it's good.

3) KILL LUST BEFORE IT KILLS YOU

Whether you're married or single, we're all in the battle for sexual purity. And winning that battle means being ruthless in putting sin to death. Col 3:5, "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry." Notice the list isn't limited to outward actions. It includes the thoughts in our minds and the desires in our hearts.

It is frighteningly easy to adopt a casual or behavioral attitude toward sin. We tell ourselves lies like, "As long as I don't actually have sex with someone, I'm good." That's a lie on two levels. First, as we saw last Sunday, adultery begins in the heart, it begins in your mind long before it becomes something you do with your body. Second, you'll never win the battle against sexual lust by drawing a line between what is ok and what is not ok and walking as close as you can to the edge without actually stepping over. Putting sin to death means being ruthless in running from temptations to sin, not toying with them.

Matt 5:29-30, "If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown

into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.”

Are you saying I’m not allowed to watch that movie? Are you saying I can’t read that book, listen to that music, or go to that club? Maybe, friend. You must humbly consider if it’s tempting you with sexual sin. Is it helping you flee sexual immorality or making it harder? But Matthew, that sounds so legalistic. Show me a Bible verse that says I can’t watch Game of Thrones!

I can’t because God wants you to do the hard work of finding out how to please the Lord. But I will say this. If you find yourself asking, “How much nudity is too much?” you’re asking the wrong question. The question is, “Does putting this image before my eyes help or hinder me in magnifying the faithfulness of God by upholding the sanctity of sex? There is no neutral territory here.

Does it help you practice Job 31:1, “I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?” Or Eph 5:3, “But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.” Or 1 Tim 5:2, “Treat younger women as sisters, in all purity.” Or Phil 4:8, “Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”

It doesn’t matter how many people are watching it. It doesn’t matter how many people are doing it. It doesn’t matter if your spouse says they don’t mind, or your Christian friends think you’re weird for not going along with the crowd. Upholding the sanctity of sex means avoiding situations where opportunities for sexual sin in our thoughts, desires, or actions abound, especially situations where the smallest part of you thinks, “I bet I could get away with it.”

Here’s what I’m pleading for. Take the enemy of sexual sin seriously, friend. Don’t make peace with lust. Kill it. Stop asking, “How far can I go?” and start asking, “How can I run after holiness?” What you’re able to do with a clear conscience may be different than what another Christian can do in the fear of the Lord. But if you pride yourself on not being a prude, or boast in how un-legalistic you are, or enjoy flaunting your liberties, or being different than all those “conservative” people in the church, you are not pleasing the Lord. You are gambling with your soul.

Prov 7:6–9, “For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice, and I have seen among the simple, I have perceived among the youths, a young man

lacking sense, passing along the street near her corner, taking the road to her house in the twilight, in the evening, at the time of night and darkness... And now, O sons, listen to me, and be attentive to the words of my mouth. Let not your heart turn aside to her ways; do not stray into her paths, for many a victim has she laid low, and all her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death.”

Know where your greatest temptations to sexual sin lie, my friend, so that you can kill lust before it kills you.

4) PURSUE PURITY BY THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL

Nothing will rob your strength for the battle like the soul-crushing weight of condemnation or the futility of trying to cleanse yourself. The stain of sexual sin cuts deeper than most. We feel our guilt. We feel our shame. It doesn't matter how many years ago you had that affair. It doesn't matter how many days it's been since you look at pornography. As the hymn declares, “No work I do, no gift I give, can cleanse my conscience, cleanse my hands. I cannot cause my soul to live.”

Here's the good news, friend. You don't need to. That's what Jesus came to do for you! He died so you could be forgiven! He rose so you could be set free! Rom 8:1-4, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

If you are a Christian, the Spirit of God dwells within you. Greater is he who is in you than he who is in the world. You are not waging war as an underdog. You are more than a conqueror through him who loved us! Does the lure of sin feel strong? The power of the Spirit is greater. Does the pull of sin feel inevitable? The power of the Spirit is greater. Are you weak and tired of resisting? The Spirit will renew your strength. Are you afraid you may stumble again in the future as other men and women have? The Spirit will guard you in all your ways. Ps 32:7, “You preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.”

The gospel says, “Don't look to our own strength for salvation. Look to the Lord! Trust in the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within you.” There are times the fight for purity feels like a hopeless cause. Why bother struggling at all if the last 20



times you eventually caved after an hour of internal wrestling? Friend, it's an exceedingly good fight and here's why. If you are willing to persevere by clinging to the promises of God, you will experience just how strong the Spirit really is.

I'm not promising an unwavering victory march. I am saying you are robbing your own joy when you deny the Spirit an opportunity to prove his power really is made perfect in weakness. Like gold refined in a fire, he will purify you. He will temper you. He will steel your soul though a thousand may fall at your right hand. The decisive factor is not what you have done before. The decisive favor is whether you will look to the Lord and triumph or look to yourself and throw in the towel.

Don't bewail your lack of self-control. Rely on the Spirit. Walk according to the Spirit. Self-control is a fruit of the Spirit, not the fear of getting caught, or the fear of feeling condemned, or the fear of having to tell an accountability partner what you did. None of those things will change your heart. But the Spirit can, and the Spirit does! So confess with Paul himself. Lord, I can't, but you can.

Here's another critically important way the gospel empowers us to pursue purity. If you are in Christ, if you are holding fast to Christ, you are not defined by the sexual sin in your past. You need not walk around this building wearing a scarlet letter. And you will not be defined by my sexual sin in the future. Your identity, your worth and value, your relationship with God, your standing before God, is grounded in the perfect obedience of Christ, not how many days it's been since you looked at pornography.

1 Cor 6:9-11, "Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

Here's what that means, Christian. God does not love you more on your good days. And he does not love you less on your bad days. Do we grieve him when we sin? Yes. Does he rejoice when we live in a way that's pleasing to him! Yes. But his love for you is not grounded in what you have done for him but by what he has done for you. Rom 5:8, "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinner, Christ died for us."

If he set his affection upon you when you were still far off, how much more will he continue to love you now that you have been brought near, eternally and

irrevocably united to his beloved Son? Your standing, your acceptance, the Father's delight in you, does not ebb and flow because his love for the Son in whom you have your being, does not ebb and flow. As much as the Father cherishes Christ, so he cherishes you, Christian.

What an encouragement that is in the fight for sexual purity! We're not fighting hoping to earn or avoid losing God's love. We are fighting because we are perfectly and completely loved and the greatness, the staggering magnitude, the undeserved gift of his love, compels us to trust and obey the One who laid down his life for us.

And our final victory is assured because of the battle he already won. Rom 7:24-25, "Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" Brothers and sisters, above all else, pursue purity in the power of the gospel.

5) LOOK TO GOD'S PEOPLE FOR HELP

I love the encouragement in 1 Cor 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man." One of the most devious lies sin tells us is that we're unique. That we're alone. That no one is tempted like I am. No one is struggling like I am. No one will understand what I'm going through. So we stay silent. We don't speak up. And that's exactly what sin wants you to do because sexual immortality is the opposite of every plant in my garden. It thrives in the dark.

1 Jn 1:7, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." Jas 5:16, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working."

I'm not saying sharing your struggle with a Christian brother or sister will make it go away. I am simply affirming what God has already said, namely, you will not make progress in the fight for purity if you go at it alone. God gives grace to the humble, friend. Humble yourself and ask for help. Ask for prayer.

And think carefully about the best way to do that with your spouse if you're married. There is such a thing as "selfish" confession of sin where we dump out all the gory details of what we've done just so we can feel better. If God is convicting you of sexual sin and you need to confess it to your spouse, ask a wise brother or sister to help you do that in a way that loves your spouse and doesn't overwhelm or take advantage of them.

6) PRIORITIZE YOUR NEIGHBOR'S GOOD

In 1 Cor 10:23–24, Paul writes, “‘All things are lawful,’ but not all things are helpful. ‘All things are lawful,’ but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor.” What’s he talking about? The fact that we are not only responsible to uphold the sanctity of sex ourselves. We are also responsible for helping the people around us do the same.

How different that kind of unselfish love is from the spirit of our age! What are we told in every popular song, every magazine, every clothing store? Show the world just how hot you are. Attention is power. If you like it, show it. If you’ve got it, flaunt it.

When I was growing up, I remember getting a handout in church called a “modesty checklist.” As well intended as that may have been, I don’t think that was particularly helpful. Why not? Because it reduced modesty to a list of outward behaviors. It didn’t emphasize the underlying heart attitude, seeking our neighbor’s good. But here’s my concern today. My concern is that in the guise of not being legalistic, we have ignored the priority of love.

For men and women alike, is what someone else does in their mind or in their heart when they look at you ultimately their spiritual responsibility? Absolutely. Scripture never lets us excuse our sin by blaming it on what someone else is doing or wearing. But that doesn’t mean we have no responsibility to help our sisters or brothers in the battle for sexual purity. Far from it. Love compels us to ask important questions that are not easy to answer but must be answered.

For example, “What is my goal in selecting the clothing I wear? Am I adorning my body in a way honors the holiness of my body? Is glorifying God my goal? Or is self-expression or making heads turn my goal? I’m not saying the uglier the outfit the more it makes much of Jesus. No. We honor the Lord when we adorn his creation, our physical bodies, in ways that reflect his beauty.

I am saying we need to ask questions like, “Is what I’m wearing likely to present a stumbling block to the people around me?” The answer to that question will vary from culture to culture. But it must be asked. And if something within you bristles when I ask as much, then you don’t understand biblical love. Love prioritizes our neighbor’s good.

Here's another example. Maybe you're in a small group of some kind where Christians gather on mission to help one another follow Jesus. At KingsWay we call them Community Groups. Many of our Community Groups host evenings where men and women meet separately. If sexual temptation never comes up in those conversations unless the group leader specifically asks you, something's wrong.

We need to love one another enough to ask hard questions and have the humility to be honest about where we're struggling. The question isn't if, but how. Love works to make mutual encouragement in the fight for purity normal, not exceptional.

7) REMEMBER THE REWARD

I know of no greater incentive, no greater encouragement, no better reason to persevere in magnifying God's covenant faithfulness by upholding the sanctity of sex than the promise Jesus makes in Matt 5:8. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Friend, those who bear his image are beautiful. I think my wife is especially beautiful! But every one of us, every super model who has ever lived, pales in comparison to the beauty and majesty and glory of the Lord of Host. And Jesus promises that seeing him for who he is, not only on the final day with our physical eyes, but also today with the eyes of faith, requires something. It requires a pure heart.

What's at stake in every choice we make to keep or ignore the 7th commandment? Nothing less than our ability to see and savor God himself. The gospel doesn't undo the fact that sin has consequences. If you engage in sexual immorality, in your thoughts, with your eyes, or with your body, you are blinding your soul to the goodness and glory of God. But when we choose to uphold the sanctity of sex, we are opening the eyes of our heart to see Jesus for who he really is.

That's why the fight for sexual purity is a fight of faith. When Jesus doesn't look that glorious or feel particularly satisfying, it's easy to run to other things like sex because we just want to feel good. We excuse our sin by saying, "Well, if he wants me to stop, he'd better get busy proving he's more amazing than that girl last night. I'm ready to be wowed whenever he's ready to wow me."

What's wrong with that attitude? Among other things, sexual sin will only make our dissatisfaction with all God is for you in Jesus worse! It dulls our hearts to the things of God. It blinds our spiritual eyes to the beauty of Jesus. If you want to see God, if

you want to stand in awe of the Lord, uphold the sanctity of sex, pursue purity of heart. Then and only then are we positioned to see God, to savor God, to enjoy God for who he really is.

God reveals himself to those who hold fast to him by faith. Who believe Jesus is better even when he doesn't feel better because God's Word says Jesus is better. That's the kind of faith that perseveres in the battle. That's the kind of faith that doesn't lose heart in the battle. Faith fights for holiness for the sake of our joy in Jesus with our eyes on the ultimate pleasure – seeing him face to face. Dennis Hollinger says it well.

“The absence of sex in heaven reminds us that the pleasures of sex are unable to yield final satisfaction. This is particularly important in light of human attempts to turn sex into idolatry by which some seek ultimate joy and pleasure. If sex is a yearning for connection and intimacy, it will no longer be significant when we are fully and ultimately connected and intimate with our Creator. Sex pales in comparison to the heavenly marriage in which we will be fully one with the God who created and redeemed us in Christ. This does not minimize the joy, goodness, and worth of physical intimacy, but reminds us that it is a sign of even greater things to come.”

CONCLUSION

Oh how we need to remember that, brothers and sisters! I don't know what you expected me to tell you this morning by way of practical, biblical guidance for running down the path of life, the path of sexual purity. Maybe you expected me to tell you to stop hanging out at your boyfriend's apartment, or to put some software on your phone, or to join an accountability group, or meet with a pastor so he can give you all the insider tips and tricks.

Is practical advice helpful? Sure. But that's not ultimately what we need the most. Nor is that what Scripture gives us. What does Scripture give us? What does the Triune God provide? He gives us good news of the gospel, the treasure of Jesus, the power of the Spirit, and the hope of heaven. He pours out every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places to equip us to run down the path of life, the path of sexual purity.

The song we're about to sing says it this way. “The Lord has promised good to me. His Word my hope secures. He will my shield and portion be. As long as life endures.” Let's pray and ask for his strength.