The Ten Commandments
Part 9 – Pursue Purity

Exodus 20:14
Like the Sixth Commandment, the Seventh consists of only two Hebrew words: *lo tinap* – "no adultery." It is meant to prohibit any person or immoral act to do damage to the relationship between husband and wife. The biblical pattern for marriage is that of an exclusive relationship between "a man and a woman who commit themselves to each other in covenant for life and, on the basis of solemn vows, become 'one flesh' physically (Genesis 2:24; Malachi 2:14; Matthew 19:4-6)" (Waltke, 429).

The Bible uniformly condemns adultery. Abimelech considered it a great sin (Genesis 20:9). Joseph called adultery a "wicked thing" (Genesis 39:9). Job connects adultery to the acts of murderers and thieves (Job 24:13-17). Jeremiah viewed it as an outrageous act (Jeremiah 29:23). In Proverbs the adulterer is portrayed as a fool (6:32; 2:15-19; 5:1-23; 6:20-35; 7:1-27). In Leviticus 18 faithfulness within marriage is codified as a means for Israel to keep herself pure from the defiling influences of the pagans.

Like all of the commandments, the seventh applies to a whole category of sins. Specifically it prohibits all sexual sins; sins which damage the marriage relationship and defile the people of God. The privileged responsibility of sex is inseparably linked to the responsibility of marriage and family. The creation order dictates that sexual intimacy is linked to a man leaving the household of his parents and clinging to his wife. Therefore there is no legitimate expression of sexual intimacy outside of marriage between one man and one woman. Jesus called lustful thoughts a violation of the seventh commandment (Matthew 5:27-28). So the seventh commandment forbids both immoral acts and thoughts.

> **Main Idea:** We love God and our neighbor by pursuing purity.

1. Pursuing Purity to love our neighbor
The word adultery is connected to the idea of impurity. To adulterate something is to introduce an impurity. So, adultery introduces impurity into something which is intended to remain pure. Something that is pure is undivided. Pure gold is absent other metals like iron. Sexual impurity is to change God's design for marriage by expanding the boundaries of physical intimacy beyond what God has prescribed. The consequences of impurity are devastating.

a) Sexual sin corrupts our relationships.
- The seventh commandment forbids adultery. It calls for sexual fidelity within the bond of marriage. The relationship between husband and wife is to be one of covenant loyalty. In marriage, the bride and groom make sacred vows to one another. In the Reformed and Presbyterian tradition a wedding is considered a service of worship. And so the taking of vows between husband and wife take place in the context of a body formally gathered for worship in the sight of God. Marriage is a covenant and because marriage is a covenant the Old Testament and the New Testament view all sexual sin as covenant disloyalty.

b) Sexual sin corrupts the body
- 1 Corinthians 6:18–20 – "Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not

know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

- Romans 1:26–27 – "For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error."

c) Sexual sin dehumanizes our neighbor.

- Sexual sin and lust reduces our neighbor to a means to satisfy our own appetites. Indulging in lust trains our eyes and minds to judge people on the basis of their ability to provide sexual gratification. This is one of the reasons Jesus applied the seventh commandment to our interior world instead of limiting it to a physical act.

2. Pursuing Purity to love God

- Sexual sin is not only a sin against our neighbor and a sin against our body. Sexual sin is a sin against God. Psalm 51:4 – "Against you, you only have I sinned…"

a) The power of the marriage metaphor

- God called his people to himself he has compared the relationship to a marriage (Hosea; Isaiah 57; Ezekiel 23; Jeremiah 3; Ephesians 5:22ff). The analogy is meant to teach us that God's relationship to us is one of covenant exclusivity.

b) Idolatry and adultery

- Psalm 86:11c – "give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name."
- To go after other gods whether they are literal idols or idols of the heart is an act of spiritual adultery. And this is the dilemma for all of us. Each of us have wandered after idols. We have all from one degree to another pursued adultery with gusto.

c) The consequences of impurity

- God promised blessings for covenant faithfulness and cursing for those who break covenant loyalty by going off after other gods. The people's blessed state in the Land of Promise depended upon their faithfulness to covenant stipulations. Impurity would make them unfit for the presence and blessings of God.

3. Hope for the impure

Ephesians 5:25–27 – "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish."

- Christ is the faithful One who will never forsake his promise. He will never break the covenant. It is not our faithfulness which binds us to God. Rather, it is God's unwavering faithfulness through Christ which binds us to him. Christ is the faithful Bridegroom who even now is purifying us that he might present us to himself one day holy without any blemish. By his perfect covenant faithfulness and sacrificial death Jesus cleanses adulterers and makes them pure.