

Sermon 74, What Is Required in the Seventh Commandment, Pt. 1, Exodus 20:14

Proposition: The seventh commandment requires you to embrace and live out your sexuality by being a man or woman.

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Introduction

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, I said that the fourth commandment was the most controversial in Christian circles. So, no doubt, it is. But this commandment is undoubtedly the most controversial in our national conversation. “Thou shalt not commit adultery” — three syllables in Hebrew. But they are three loaded syllables.

The confusion on this topic runs deep. In no other commandment do I anticipate needing to take so many steps back. When we look at “thou shalt not steal” I don’t anticipate spending a long time describing what property is. [Editor’s note: I was totally wrong. Looks like that will actually get a whole sermon to itself as well.] When we looked at the second commandment, I didn’t need to tell you what worship was. But when we look at “thou shalt not commit adultery,”

we have to not only say what adultery is, but say what sexuality is, and thus say what human beings are. This command makes no sense without a biblical anthropology to go with it. It sounds to the unbelievers around us like saying “Don’t charge your phone on that cable. That’s my special cable.” Well, honestly. It is not hurting the cable one bit to plug it into one phone and then into another phone. And to the nonbeliever, that’s what sexual activity is. And so, in order to understand why committing adultery is a big deal, we have to step back and ask “What is sexual activity?” and “What is sexuality?”

What we’ll see is that the seventh commandment requires chastity, and that chastity means making right use of your sexuality. We’re going to talk about that in terms of what men and women are called to do, at the most basic level. Both sexes are called to take dominion, love God and neighbor, and make disciples. Men are particularly called to work and guard, while women are particularly called to make homes and glorify the joint task of dominion. All of this is background that you need to know before you can exercise the virtue of chastity and use your sexuality rightly.

I. The Joint Tasks of Men & Women

We begin by talking about the joint tasks. You know what a man is and what a woman is. They are the two sexes of human beings. What are both men and women alike called to do?

A. The Dominion Mandate, Gen. 1:28

The first answer, and the only task in the Bible that is explicitly ascribed to both men and women, is the task of dominion. Notice how Moses says “male and female created He them,” and then tells us what God said to the man and the woman He had created.

1. Be Fruitful, Multiply, Fill the Earth

The first part of the joint task is to be fruitful, to multiply, to fill the earth. In other words, of course, God means “Have children.” Have so many children, in fact, that you fill the planet with human beings. Now, God loves fertility and He made all the living things He made to bring forth seed after their kind. But only to humans did He say to take over the planet. That is literally our first mission. We are not called to limit ourselves to some small corner while “nature” conceived of as non-human rules the rest. We are supposed to fill and rule it all. Lots of people complain about overpopulation, and while I agree that traffic is bad, traffic is just a symptom of poor urban design. Human beings were made to take over the planet. Men, get to work on that. Women, get to work on that.

2. Subdue & Take Dominion Over All Nature

And when you’ve filled the earth, you need to subdue it. The word “subdue” means “tread down.” The earth is yours to walk on, yours to shape, yours to command. The donation of Constantine may have been spurious, but the gift of God is real. The earth belongs to the children of man. And this task of dominion, accomplished in large part through our daily callings and the hard work we do in them, belongs to both men and women.

B. The Great Commandment, Matt. 22:37-39

The great commandment is the second of the universal commissions we find in the pages of Scripture. You’re familiar with it: Love God, love your neighbor. That is the calling of both men

and women. At the highest level, this is what you're supposed to be doing. Now, you love your neighbor again by performing your daily calling and showing up to work. You love God by performing your Sunday calling and showing up to worship.

C. The Great Commission, Matt. 28:18-20

And finally, the great commission to go and make disciples by baptizing and teaching belongs to every Christian, and since every human should be a Christian, it ultimately belongs to every human.

So whether you are male or female, you are called to subdue the earth, love God and neighbor, and make disciples. Beyond that, in many ways, you are left to do as you please.

However, that is not quite all Scripture says on the subject. It does comment on the special tasks of men as men and women as women.

II. The Special Tasks of Each Sex

What does it say? It does not say specifically that women are to wear dresses and do a larger proportion of the child care. From that point, many people have foolishly concluded that the Bible actually says nothing at all on the topic. Such a conclusion is patently false. The Bible describes the special tasks of men and women with two verbs each.

A. Men as such, Gen. 2:15

The description of the man's task is found in Genesis 2, where Moses records that Yahweh God took the man and put him into the garden to work it and guard it. These two words recur later as a description of the task of the priests in the tabernacle (e.g., Num. 3:8).

1. Work

The first is "work." Men, we are made to work! This is our particular calling. If you are sexed male, then you are supposed to work. That is your special calling in this world. God does not say that you have to work in motorcycle repair, or that you cannot teach elementary school. But He does say that you have to work. The typical sin of men is to sit around and shoot the breeze, to do only fun things and make the women do all the grunt work. That is completely ungodly and evil. Adam was made to work, and so are you.

2. Guard

The other calling of men is to guard — to protect the home, the land, the place in which they have jurisdiction. Do you guard your property? Your family? Your house? Your stuff? This means, of course, far more than simply shooting the occasional intruder. It means protecting all of what the Lord has given you from all enemies, foreign and domestic. Your own wastefulness, or your children's, is likely a much bigger threat than the biker gangs of your imagination.

So men, do you work? Do you guard? Are you a provider and protector? If that is not what you're using your sexuality for, you're using it wrong. You were not made a man so you could bully the weak. You were not made a man so you could have all the fun and force everyone to serve you. You are to protect — to protect God's holy places, which are all around you. He dwells in His people; we are His Temple now. And thus, as it was Adam's priestly task to guard the sanctuary of God, so it continues to be your priestly task to guard and protect the sanctuary of God.

B. Women as such

Women, your task is not mentioned in Genesis 2, but instead in later books of the Bible.

1. Make homes, Prov. 14:1

The first thing that Scripture mentions about women as such, regardless of whether they are single or married, childless or fruitful, is that they are homemakers. Every wise woman builds her house. That is not saying that every wise woman is a contractor and assembles the framing, drywall, etc. of her home. It is saying that every God-fearing woman takes it upon herself to make a home — a place to live, a place in which human beings can flourish, be fed and loved and rested. We saw this so clearly just in our basement. The way Grace took care of the rented room was so beautiful and homey and delightful — and the way Seth took care of it was squalid and sad. God-fearing women, you are not always called to marriage. You are not always called to childbearing. You are not always called to the task of helping your man, because God may not give you a man. But you are called to make a home, a place fit for human habitation. That is true even if you are the only one living in it.

Are you a homemaker? The text doesn't say that making homes is the sum total of everything women do, or all they're "good for." As I just mentioned, women and men alike are called to the dominion mandate, the great commandment, and the great commission. Making a home is not allowed to crowd out those other tasks. But ladies, you are indeed called to make homes.

2. Glorify the joint task of human dominion, 1 Cor. 11:7

The other thing you're called to do is to be what the apostle calls "the glory of man," right after saying that "man is the image and glory of God." Woman is the glory of the glory of God. What does this mean practically?

Well, when you hear that men are supposed to glorify God, you know that means that we men are called to make God look good. We are supposed to highlight His majesty and awesomeness. When it says that woman is the glory of man, though, we tend to think that it means that the point of women's existence is to make men look good.

Let's just say that that is true. But there's a good way and a bad way to do that. Let me compare it to a basketball game. The point of the team's existence is to play basketball games. There is a good way and a bad way to play basketball games.

The bad way to glorify men is to lie, connive, and falsify their record. Propaganda and fake news, whether perpetrated by women on behalf of men or vice versa, are wrong and evil. The good way women are supposed make men look good is this: women are supposed to make the joint task of human dominion look good. Women, in other words, spruce up the entire human race. We know that this is true in practice; it is women who generally care more about grooming, fashion, cleanliness, and so on. Women, it is your job to glorify the work of the dominion mandate, the great commandment, and the great commission. That's what it means to be the glory of man. You participate in the joint tasks; you make the joint tasks look good. And that is a big part of your individual task as women.

III. The Joint Task

So what is that joint task? Well, it begins with being fruitful and multiplying.

A. Being Fruitful Requires Marriage

And that, my friends, is the dirty little secret that is driving almost all of the gender confusion in our day. Fulfilling the dominion mandate, carrying out our major task as the human race, requires men and women to work together. So many of the questions, so much of the confusion, come back to the question of “What on earth do I do with my sexuality when I don’t have a spouse? What is a single man for? What is a single woman for?” The answer, as I just said, is that men are working and guarding, while women are for homemaking and glorifying. That is what we are called to do, whether separately or together. But what exactly are we working on and guarding, men? What is the purpose of a home, exactly, and what activities should be glorified by all the quintessentially girly things one associates with Pinterest (candles in Mason jars, for instance) and what activities should not be glorified? These questions can only be answered with reference to the original dominion mandate.

Men, we’re working on all the projects that are part of filling the earth and subduing it. We are guarding these projects against those who would undermine and destroy them. Women, you are making a home because the home is the institution that allows for the filling of the earth; you are glorifying those human activities that contribute to the joint task of filling and subduing, and discouraging those things that fail to fill and fail to subdue.

In other words, of course, the vast majority of us are going to find our place in carrying out the dominion mandate in marriage. There is no legitimate being fruitful and multiplying outside of that.

But within marriage, too, the Bible is clear: men and women have different, sex-based roles.

B. Marriage Requires Different Roles

Husbands cannot act just the same as wives; wives cannot act just the same as husbands. The two of them are made to be different and told to be different. I certainly don’t want a wife who looks and acts just like me!

1. Husbands

So what is the calling of a married man?

a) Love, Eph. 5:25

Husbands, love your wives. That is the straightforward command of scripture. You are commanded by God to wish your wives the best, do the best you can for them, and to enjoy their company, to delight in them. That is the duty of husbands. That is part of what it means to be a married man.

b) Head, Eph. 5:23

The other part of a husband’s duty is to head up the relationship. That means that you set the tone, the priorities, the goals. The head doesn’t do everything. The head is not the most important part of the body *per se*. But the head is in charge in an important respect. The husband is the

head of his wife, and he needs to act like it. Men, headship does not mean bullying. It does not mean abdication. Paul explicitly puts in parallel with how Jesus is head of the church. To be head means to be like Jesus in laying down your life and saving your wife by offering yourself in her place.

This is how you get to be fruitful and multiply. A man who lives in his mom's basement on porn and video games has no idea how to love and head, and thus he is rightly single and lonely.

2. Wives

But wives, you are not off the hook either. Women are called to two major things in the marriage relationship that produces fruit and multiplies the number of human beings in accordance with the dominion mandate.

a) Respect, Eph. 5:33

The wife is called to fear her husband — the same word used for fearing God, and rightly translated as “reverence” or “respect.” Wives, you are called to admire your husbands. So women, don't marry a man you can't admire. That would be foolish and even evil. If you pity him, don't even think about marrying him.

b) Help, Gen. 2:18

The other thing you are called to do, wives, is to help your man. He is not there to help you. You are there to help him. You are working together on the joint tasks of the dominion mandate, the great commandment, and the great commission. But at the end of the day, you were created for him and he was not created for you. A relationship that gets this fundamental truth backwards is a miserable relationship for both the husband and the wife, and even more miserable for the kids. You are called to glorify the joint task, wife. But a lot of the time, that is going to feel to you like you are mostly just making your husband's part of it look good. That is what being a helper means. I spent most of this past week helping a friend build his pole barn. At the end of the week, he had a pole barn, and I didn't. I did a lot to make that pole barn look good. Should I resent that? Should I despise my friend because I helped him with something that is, after all, his project? Of course not. Nor, wives, should you despise your husband because you helped him. And you definitely shouldn't despise yourself for doing what you were made to do. You are a helper. You are helping with the joint tasks. You are not called to take over the tasks of working and guarding unless your husband is disabled and truly can't do them. Same goes for the task of headship. And love is just a given within every human relationship, though husbands tend to forget it.

How is all of this related to the gospel? The good news that men and women are different, but made for each other, is related to the good news that God's Anointed and God's church are made for each other. Your femininity is like the holy mother church. Your masculinity is like the holy Son of God. Don't dislike or despise that. Glory in that. And then you will be ready to begin to keep the seventh commandment, imitating Christ in your chastity. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, amen.