

Deuteronomy 5:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Neither shalt thou commit adultery.

Analysis

The seventh commandment 'Neither shalt thou commit adultery' protects marriage covenant and sexual purity. Adultery violates the one-flesh union (Genesis 2:24), betrays covenant vows, and distorts God's design for human sexuality within marriage. This command upholds marriage as sacred, reflecting Christ's relationship with His church (Ephesians 5:25-32). Jesus expands this to prohibit lustful thoughts (Matthew 5:27-28), showing sexual purity begins in the heart. The Reformed tradition applies this broadly to all sexual immorality, defending marriage as covenantal, permanent, and exclusively heterosexual.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern cultures tolerated various sexual practices Israel's law prohibited: temple prostitution, polygamy's abuses, and adultery (though penalties existed). Israel's law prescribed death for adultery (Leviticus 20:10, Deuteronomy 22:22), emphasizing covenant marriage's sanctity. Prophets used adultery metaphorically for Israel's spiritual unfaithfulness (Hosea 1-3, Jeremiah 3, Ezekiel 16). Jesus' mercy toward the adulteress (John 8:1-11) demonstrated grace while upholding the law's standard ('sin no more').

Related Passages

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

1 John 4:8 — God is love

Study Questions

1. How does the sanctity of marriage reflect Christ's covenantal relationship with the church?
2. What does Jesus' expansion of this command to include lustful thoughts teach about God's concern for heart purity, not merely external conformity?

Interlinear Text

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H3808

Neither shalt thou commit adultery

H5003

Additional Cross-References

Exodus 20:14 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Luke 18:20 (Parallel theme): Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.

Leviticus 20:10 (Parallel theme): And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.