

Sing before the service: Psalm 145:1, 10

Our help is in the Name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

Beloved, grace and peace be to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ through the mighty working of God the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Psalm of praise: 33:1

Prayer:

O Lord, our hope in this life is that you hear our prayers and, when time has come, you will take us into your eternal kingdom. Our hope of eternal life is particularly strengthened by the fact that, in the midst of sadness, death and mourning in this life, we still receive so much good from you.

Lord, what more can we do than continually approach you and beg for mercy? Life would be futile without your strength that supports us every moment, because otherwise we would never have been saved from the violence of Satan and his works!

Today we pray for the aged among us – those who have become physically weak through illness. O Lord, we also pray for those who endure much stress and who are in positions of great responsibility. Lord, grant them your love in abundance. Bestow your grace on them through the consolation of your Spirit who ensures us all of your heaven awaiting us – where everything that's imperfect as a result of sin will belong to the past forever.

We also confess that we are sadly lacking holiness – not only in what we do but also in what we think and what we say. But then we also confess the weakness of our natural selves. We confess that we often try to fight against these sins, but that evil and its violence often overrun us so that what we think and do is not in the honour of your holiness.

O Lord, grant us so much strength that we can be worthy in all respects of bearing your image. Let us be clothed with the necessary knowledge and righteousness so that your holiness will be reflected by every one of us.

We pray for our country. It feels as if the violence of the entire world is gathering around us. Every day is a day of battle to save the portion of what we inherit from you. Please help us, o Lord.

We do not only pray for physical help, because we could destroy our enemies without the right faith. We pray especially for true faith so that our lives will be in your honour. Lord, hear us in Jesus' Name.

Amen.

Psalm 16:1

Scripture reading: 1 Thessalonians 4

Scripture text: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-13; Catechism Lord's Day 41 (only Q 108)

We all know and believe that we often sin every day. And we willingly admit that we regularly trespass against those particular commandments.

But then we get to the seventh commandment.

- This is one of the commandments we do not consider seriously – we refuse to admit that we commit sins in our minds against our own holiness and that of our neighbour!
- While in the back of our minds we hear the Word of God that all unchastity is cursed!

In many respects the church is unable to act against trespassers of this commandment. However, it is of the utmost importance to preach about the dangers and consequences of trespassing against this commandment, because it is the will of God that we maintain the highest level of chastity in our lives.

- The seventh commandment first teaches us about God's judgment of any form of unchastity.
- Then it teaches us about our calling with regard to chastity within and outside of marriage.
Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. (Hebrews 13:4 NIV)
- It also teaches us that if we keep this commandment, the Lord will watch over our lives (body and soul) and He will also watch over that of the congregation!

The matter of chastity weighs extremely heavily with the Lord. In Leviticus 18 and 20 we find a lengthy list of trespasses in connection with unchastity. And the Lord commands the death penalty for all those trespasses. Leviticus 20:10:

- **If a man commits adultery with another man's wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.** (Leviticus 20:10 NIV)
- Elsewhere in the Scriptures people had to be burned to death for unchaste conduct. Unchastity – that is adultery – is cursed by God.

About three months later Judah was told, “Your daughter-in-law Tamar is guilty of prostitution, and as a result she is now pregnant.”

Judah said, “Bring her out and have her burned to death!” (Genesis 38:24 NIV)

'If a man marries both a woman and her mother, it is wicked. Both he and they must be burned in the fire, so that no wickedness will be among you.
(Leviticus 20:14 NIV)

Modern society has moved very much away from the will of the Lord and what He requires of us.

It no longer stands to reason that living together outside of matrimony is cursed. In certain circles it is already quite acceptable.

- Note carefully what the Lord does: He curses the sin – not the people committing the sin.
- But if people continue to cling to this sin they will eventually not be able to be separated from the curse clinging to this sin.

We should indeed reflect on why the Lord is so very serious about cursing this sin.

The first reason is because this sin ruins the people's soul and body.

- God created man to his image – this implies that we should also reflect the holiness of God.
- In our sexual life our conduct must be as irreproachable as God is.

Adultery separates the soul of man from God.

- The impurity of this transgression means severance of your relationship with God, because God will not and cannot live in a tainted temple.
- This sin is desecrating the Lord's holiest gift to us in this life.

God particularly instituted and ordained marriage to symbolise our fellowship with Him.

- Committing adultery means that we renounce God as well as his holy gift!
- Hence the Lord says that idolatry is adultery away from the Lord.

The second reason is because this sin corrupts God's institutions.

- Marriage is the first unit God instituted in society.
 - It is meant to be the foundation on which the entire development of mankind is based.
 - The church and the state have to be based on the family, hence on the marriage.

- If the marriage fails as a result of unchastity, it stands to reason that the church and all levels where man moves will be affected by it.
- We can even say that adultery in a certain sense destroys the future of mankind!

The third reason why God is resolute about this sin is because people ruin each other through it.

- Unchastity leads to more sins – it always results in some form of deceit.
 - When you practise unchastity you tell lies to justify yourself.
- The result of this sin: jealousy and hypocrisy and eventually hatred!
 - This sin sometimes even leads to murder.
 - In any case it leads to inexpressible misery.

Unchastity comes in various forms:

- In words and the use of language,
- but also in sexually tempting clothes we wear.
- And then also the act of unchastity.
- The person who acts as such, ruins him/herself to such an extent that he/she loses his/her supreme beauty.
 - It debases you from being a child of God to a person who strives after the darkness of the world of Satan.
- God then withdraws his kindness from these people and his curse takes effect.
 - Hence we read in the closing passage of the Scriptures that the sexually immoral will be outside the gates of the kingdom of God (Revelation 22:15).
 - To be outside means to be condemned! This means to be in hell!

The seventh commandment also teaches us about man's calling within and outside of marriage.

- The Lord forbids any form of disgracefulness because our body and soul are temples of God.
- The Holy Spirit dwells in them and therefore both must be protected with care – and kept holy!

We must go back to creation to be able to understand this matter. God is love. And He created man in love.

- He gave Adam a wife to live with him in a loving relationship.
- The fact that the Lord made only one man with one woman, proves that He wants every man to marry only one woman, and that all his activities and his life should be arranged around this one woman that God has given him. The same applies to women.

The calling of this couple is to focus on their final destination with God and to do this in a loving relationship.

- The basis is love for each other and love for God.
- Unchastity in any form whatsoever is in direct opposition to the love of God.
- On the outside unchastity may seem very attractive but on the inside it is revolting and cursed by God.

This commandment also speaks to parents regarding the upbringing of their children.

- This commandment is an appeal from the Lord to all parents who believe to teach their children all about the holiness of God.
- And to teach them, from early childhood, to strive after sharing in the holiness of God.
- Also, to nurture and protect God's holiness in their own bodies.

In this way God's holy presence will fill every family like the offers in the Old Testament filled the entire temple with its pleasant aroma!

Eventually the upbringing of the family will also take effect in the church. The entire church will then be protected against the sin of unchastity.

- We are living in a world full of temptations for both young and old.
 - There are books, magazines, films, videos, etc that are extremely repulsive in the light of God's kingdom!
 - Various ways of relaxation are not fit for Christians, because they are potential breeding-ground for this sin.

Living according to this commandment is actually easy. The Lord Jesus Christ set the example.

- You should be aware of God's presence every moment of your life.
- Live according to the holiness of God – every moment – as God requires you to do!
for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.” (1 Peter 1:16) NIV
- Pray regularly. We should actually pray like the Lord Jesus Christ – continually!

The Lord Jesus Christ also taught us that there is a way to turn around.

- God forgives you when you repent and turn away from this sin. The Lord Jesus also died for this sin.
- Hence the Lord Jesus could boldly say that if any one of the people present was without sin, he could be the first to throw a stone at the woman who had been caught in the act of adultery! (John 8:7)
 - Nobody threw a stone, because only one Person had never shared in this sin – the Lord Jesus Himself.
 - But He did not stone her – He let her go in peace, because He did not condemn her.

Let us then fight against unchastity. For the sake of our own holiness. But above all, so that the Spirit of God can dwell in us and delight in the holiness of our soul and body.

The Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 41 teaches us the following about the seventh commandment:

108. Q. What does the seventh commandment teach us?

A. That all unchastity is cursed by God.[1] We must therefore detest it from the heart[2] and live chaste and disciplined lives, both within and outside of holy marriage.[3]

[1] Lev. 18:30; Eph. 5:3-5. [2] Jude 22, 23. [3] I Cor. 7:1-9; I Thess. 4:3-8; Heb. 13:4.

Amen.

Closing prayer:

We thank you, o Lord, for protecting us against evil. And while none of us are without sins, we pray for forgiveness for trespassing this commandment. And we plead with you to give us the strength to live a holy life. We thank you for the redemptive sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ that washed away our sins, so that we could appear spotless and boldly before you. Hear us on Christ's behalf.

Amen.

Closing psalm: 146:1, 8

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Amen