

## The 6<sup>th</sup> Commandment

### By David Roth

**Sermon:** They started out as most couples do. They were full of hope, full of love. They had a wonderful wedding. They were surrounded by their families. They were surrounded by their friends. And they exchanged vows promising their love to each other forever. They promised to be faithful and to be true. And they had a great honeymoon. They started their lives afterward with a new energy, a new enthusiasm, and they couldn't seem to spend enough time together. They enjoyed each other's company so much.

Then, as the years passed, they more and more took interest in their own things – their own hobbies, their own friendships. And they had their share of misunderstandings between them, and miscommunications, and disappointments, and hurts. And they slowly drifted apart. Not intentionally, but more because they weren't thinking about it. They weren't paying attention. Making love became more and more infrequent, it became a task, or an obligation to the other. And they started to think what life would be like with someone else - maybe the grocery clerk, or their friend's spouse. They weren't looking; they were just thinking about it.

And one day someone caught their attention, and they started to feel sparks when they saw that person at work, or maybe that parent at drop-off at school. And they started to hope that they would run into that person. They tried to plan their coffee breaks around them, and drop their kids off at the same time so they would see each other. And they began to form a deep friendship. They started to find time to talk to each other and spend time together, and started to have a deep dependence on each other, even though they were “just friends.”

Then it happened one night that they crossed that line with that person.

Most people don't ever plan to commit adultery. It's not something they set out to do. Many people love the ideal of marriage. They love the promise of a love greater than themselves, than two people, that's from the Lord, that has the promise of eternity in it. They love the church. They love marriage. They think it's sacred, but they end up swept away in an affair, or some habit that's destructive.

It could be internet pornography or other fantasies. Because it's not just about adultery as we strictly understand it, but evils and disorders that we get involved in. The question is, How does this happen? I want to talk about the story of David to illustrate this a bit. Many of us think of King David as a great hero of the Bible. He defeated Goliath as just a shepherd boy with a sling and a stone. He used to play the harp for King Saul, to soothe him when Saul was distressed. He became king himself, and as a king he conquered all the enemies in the land of Canaan. He made it peaceful for the Children of Israel. He wrote many of the Psalms that we find in the Word, that we all love. The book of *Samuel* says about David “The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart.”

But after David was king he committed adultery, and he had someone murdered so that he could take that man's wife for himself. His sin involved coveting his neighbor's wife, and it involved theft. It involved deceit as well. Which supports what the Writings for the New Church say about breaking one of these commandments with set purpose. It says if anyone acts purposely or deliberately against any other commandment of the Decalogue, he or she acts also against the rest. If you choose to break one of them purposely, you end up breaking them all.

David fell prey to the hells, and the question of course is, Why did he do that? There are two main reasons I want to talk about. The first one involves the fact that David was a warrior. That was one of his main qualities. He was a soldier. He had led people in many battles and he conquered many peoples and many nations. He expanded Israel's borders far beyond what they had been. Warfare, in the Lord's Word, illustrates battles that we struggle with, temptations we fight, and that we wage. But the story says that David, at the time he committed these sins, was staying at home. He didn't go out to fight. It says it was the time when kings go out to battle, but David stayed at Jerusalem.

So the first problem was that he didn't go, and he didn't fight. When a temptation arises, for us, we have to fight against it. We have to fight and use (what feels like) our own strength against that particular disorder that we're attracted to.

We can do things to help buoy ourselves, so that when these temptations show up, we have strength. We can attend church, hear a message, sing songs to the Lord and be reminded of what we're trying to do. We can develop a daily habit of reading the Lord's Word so we can learn Truths. We can involve ourselves with daily prayers to the Lord for strength. Maybe we can be in a small group with other people and talk about our issues and get strength in that way. All these things can help reinforce within us what is good. We need to be vigilant, and make it a daily thing.

We're talking about just being on your toes spiritually, being aware of what it is that you struggle with, so when temptation does show up you can choose to fight it. The Lord says, "Take up your cross daily." Be aware of the signs that show up that are going to test you. We know what they are. You're probably aware enough of your spiritual path that you know what things will show up, if you eventually bite into them, that will lead you in a place where you don't want to go. Be on your toes, be aware of the signs, stop that prelude and fight against it. We have to stand up and fight. Like the kids – run away. Say "No."

The Writings say that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. How often has that happened, where we have this idea of what it is that we want to do, what we want to be, and yet executing in our outward life becomes difficult. I love what Rev. Ray Silverman said, at a marriage seminar, that "as in heaven, so upon the earth" is being able to take what we know about, and what we believe, and applying it in both Heaven and on earth.

There are two reasons to be especially careful and vigilant. The first is that from heredity, from our parents and their parents, we are inclined to evils of every kind, the

Writings say. The Writings say that we're naturally drawn to certain things. You heard the words of the psalmist: "I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." He's not talking about what was going on with his mother. He was talking about the fact that there's heredity that's passed on to us from our ancestors – things we incline to. Study your family tree sometime. Ask, What kind of things did Mom and Dad and Grandmom have trouble with? You can see how those things can be passed on from generation to generation, unless they're broken by one of the individuals in the tree.

The Writings also say that we strive after what is forbidden, which doesn't seem to be a good thing. We tend to say: "If I'm not allowed to do it, then I'm going to do it." As a kid this tendency was much more obvious in our life. "If I'm not allowed to do it, I'm going to do it anyway." But as an adult we tend to do the same thing.

The Writings also say that if we weren't withheld by the Lord with His strength, we would rush headlong into these things, and indulge in them. We would rush out like a dog let out of those things at a dog race. You know – whoosh, right after the rabbit.

Think about like this: these things are hooks in us. They get tugged from time to time. They can't be yanked though, unless we've actually chosen to do them. I'm going to emphasize that- these are only inclinations that tug at us. Once we actually choose to do them, they become a hook that actually is hard for us to resist. It yanks upon us.

Think about it in terms of computers. When you visit a website and a cookie gets attached to your computer the next time you go to the store, they know who you are. There's a little hook on there. So the next time it's easier to upload your site. Or they might slip a virus in too or they track what you are doing.

There are some things that have no hooks in us at all. But we all have things that are our Achilles heel, for us. But the Lord says He withholds us from these things if we are willing to be withheld. But it takes a long struggle to get far away enough from these hereditary inclinations that we are actually free from them. That's why the children of Israel were in their wilderness journey – it takes forty years. It illustrates in a natural way how our journey takes a while. And one problem that we can encounter in our life, is that we can deny the fact that we're actually on the journey, that this is a process. Right? Do you ever have that? "Well," you say, "I'm not really in the wilderness. I'm actually in the promised land." I'd like to encourage you to think about your life and go, "Well maybe." Just have the humility to admit, "Well, you know, maybe I'm in the wilderness here. And I need some help. I need to be led by the Lord."

We're here today at church because we are on a journey. We admit that fact. And church is a place where we can get help on that journey. You might think of a church as a hospital, and it's a hospital where you treat sickness, and help people get well and get to a place where they can go on their own and actually do things. It's not a museum to prop up the perfect people, [where] you come and see all the perfect people so you can be like them. It's a place where you're struggling, and you try to get help with that.

If you're struggling with lust, you're not alone in that. There are other people that do that. If you have trouble with telling the truth – same thing. And if you're critical of other people – and some of you may have become more aware of how critical you are by doing the tasks this week, for *Rise Above It*. There are many other people like you. If you love yourself and your own opinions above all things – how common is that? We have a whole department dedicated to that, where you won't trust, and let go, and trust in the Lord. That's something that a lot of us face as well.

Do you want to be made well? It's a question the Lord often asked people. The Lord had the power to heal them, but he wouldn't just reach out and say, "Oh, I see you're sick. I'll heal you." Because He could have done that with so many people. But He would ask them, "Do you want to be made well?" We have to have that willingness within us to be made well, and do the things that the Lord asks us to do so that can happen.

If you look at the path of the children of Israel, it was fraught with bad things. They worshipped the golden calf, they rebelled against the Lord time and time again, they complained about everything. They married women of other nations, which the Lord strictly forbade them to do. But it was all part of their successful journey to the promised land. [This] symbolizes ourselves – that we have a journey that's not going to be perfect and we have to admit that. But are we in fact on that journey, and are we striving to be on that journey, and get to the right place?

We're inclined to evils of every kind, as the Lord said. And some of them we're addicted to. We probably indulge in them to the point where we can't stop doing it. At least we don't feel like we can. We know we shouldn't do it, we say we won't do it, and we do it anyway. Ever have that experience? Sure. You have to admit that first? How does that happen? How do we get to that point?

It's actually by the influence of hell. Which brings us to the second reason to be vigilant, and careful. It's the nature of hell. People in hell are professionals at adultery. They're the best. They adulterate things all the time. Adultery means to add to something, or to make it different, to adulterate it. To say it differently, to corrupt what's good and true. That's what they do best. Things flow in from the Lord, and they'll twist it, and turn it into something that's not what it was supposed to be. Did you ever have someone do that with your words? You say something and they twist it into something completely opposite? How bad that feels? That's what adultery is – it's twisting something good into something that's not good. They destroy innocence, they destroy purity, chasteness and integrity, and they slowly erode away at these qualities in us. So their influence and their message is constantly knocking on our door all the time.

I'm going to read you a couple of quotes from the Writings for the New Church in the beginning of a discussion on the subject of adultery. In reference to "You shall not commit adultery," the Writings say, "Who at this day can believe that the delight of adultery is hell with a person, and that the delight of marriage is heaven with him?" This is a very clear definition. The delight of adultery is hell, and the delight of marriage is

heaven. And it asks more questions. It says, “Who at this day can believe that the love of adultery is the fundamental love of all infernal and diabolical loves?” It’s at the root of all evil loves, it says. “And who at this day can believe that he who is in a love of adultery believes nothing of the Word, thus nothing of the church, and even in his heart denies God?” The point being that the delight of adultery is the fountainhead of all evil loves. It’s hell with us.

If you think about hell... hell wants to destroy you. It wants to destroy your marriage, the innocence of your children. I don’t know about you, but I’ve noticed that people don’t like to talk about hell, and evil, and sin. They like to deny that those things exist. I don’t get that. I mean, I don’t get how you can deny that those things exist, that there’s evil in the world. Just read the news sometime, for one example.

I want to read you a passage that I find hard to read, because ... I’d like to believe that it’s not true. It’s about children. It says, “By much experience I’ve also been enabled to learn that evil spirits especially hate little children. Quite often I have seen little children – they wanted to hurt them in various ways, even to kill them, as I was given to know from seeing their fantasies. Children’s objects – things that give little ones joy – they also hate. In short, anything pertaining to little children. The reason is that little children are innocent beings, and it is innocent people most of all that they persecute and hate. The reason is that they hate the Lord who alone is innocence.” Horrible passage, but it is very clear that there is a problem, that the evil spirits are after things that are innocent and good. And evil is contagious, and has broad, sweeping and damaging effects on many people.

You see it in King David’s life. King David was drawn in. If you look at the life of David, it may be surprising that he was. He’s writing all these beautiful psalms, he trusted in the Lord, and suddenly he’s in the situation where he’s committing adultery with Bathsheba and having Uriah the Hittite killed so he can take his wife.

Hell gets us in other ways, and I want to share with you different things that they do. You might be familiar with these, but one of the passages in the Heavenly Doctrines says that they employ every kind of malice, every kind of guile, and deceit, every kind of trickery and every kind of cruelty. Notice the words used there – malice, guile, deceit, trickery, and cruelty- these are the intentions behind what they’re doing.

One thing they’ll do is, they’ll introduce a falsity into our mind and then charge us with possessing it. Have you ever had that happen to you? There’s a false idea in your mind, and the evil spirits accuse you for having it. “How can you think that? Here you go.” And then they turn it on you. And you get hung up in guilt and shame.

They put the ends that we have in mind in doubt. The greater the love, the greater the doubt they will sow in us. “This marriage won’t work for you.” “You’ll never be free of this particular habit.” And so on. The Writings say, as soon as they get the scent of anything we love, they attack it. As soon as they notice that there is something you care about, they go after it. They flatter you, and try to win you over so that you’ll trust them.

And then they destroy your loves. “You’re doing a great job!” and then, pfft – “You prideful person!” And so on. They set ablaze their evil desires in us, and make us feel like they’re our own. Then we are stuck with this desire that’s really theirs, and they make us believe it’s our own.

They also keep our mind fixed on one thing and they fill it with delusions so they get us obsessed with thoughts and ideas. Have you ever had that happen, where you get completely obsessed with something? Where is that coming from? It’s coming from them. They dim the light of truth in our minds, so that we lose sight of what it is that we’re trying to do. They turn out the light so we can’t see what’s true any more.

So these are the kinds of things we’re up against. And it’s real! I mean, we like to think it isn’t. As a preacher, I have to be careful about saying the words *sin* and *evil* too much, because it turns people off. You have to say things like, *bad habits*, and *disruptive tendencies* and so on, but we’re talking about evil. We’re talking about nasty, bad, horrible stuff. And people that really want us to do that. It’s uncomfortable talking about it, but if we don’t talk about it, that’s a win in their column, isn’t it. If we aren’t willing to turn on the light, then they’ve already taken control.

We need to be vigilant and go to war against the things that arise in our life that are hurtful. We need to be trained, just as if we are soldiers. You need to be trained, to be prepared, and you need to be aware of what the enemy is doing. Or you can get killed, spiritually.

Which brings us to the second problem of King David in this story. The first is that he didn’t go out to fight. The second is that he saw Bathsheba bathing on the roof and he felt lust. What did he do? Did he turn and run? No. It says he “inquired about her.” He wanted to find out more about this person. “Who is that?... Oh, her husband must be away at war. Hmmm... I’m king.... Hmmm.” And so on. I love a quote that I got from Peter Rhodes that says that “if the devil is a salesman, don’t haggle over price”. Don’t find out how much you can get knocked off of it. If he’s offering something, say “No.” Don’t consider it. You might say things like, “I look, but I don’t touch.” You’re haggling over price. Or, “I window-shop from time to time.” Same thing. Don’t mess with those early delights, with any evil. Any evil at all.

As John Dryden writes, “Better to shun the bait than to struggle in the snare.” Don’t even go out for the bait, because you’re going to get caught, you’re going to get hooked. Mark Twain writes, “It is easier to stay out, than get out.” Is that true? We really have to be careful, because once these things get a toe-hold in our life we have delight attached to them, and it’s very difficult to step away from things that we love and care about.

Adultery begins by looking just a little bit further. Keep your eyes forward. Here’s an example. Someone attractive to you jogs by on the road. What do you do? Do you look in the rearview mirror? Do you keep your eyes front? If you do look in the rearview mirror, what are you looking for? What’s the point? To make sure they’re okay? What

body parts are you looking at when you're looking at them in the mirror? And so on. One simple choice is, just keep your eyes front, in that sense.

Joseph is a good role model for us. He was in a situation where he had complete control over Potiphar's house. He had everything in his hand, and no one would have known if he had slept with Potiphar's wife. It is clear that he had complete control of the situation. But he said, "No." He said it repeatedly. Over and over, "no, no, no." He was badgered constantly. And eventually, when she grabbed him and said, "No, you've got to do this thing!" he ran away and his garment tore in her hand. And he was accused of trying to rape her, and he was thrown into prison. He went to prison for that – but it was better than another place he might have gone if he had said, "Okay." The Lord says, "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation." Watch and pray. Pay attention and ask for help. Do both of those things.

I'm going to read this passage which you sometimes hear me read. To me, it's one of the most clear passages on what we're fighting against, and how vigilant we need to be in this. It says, "Everyone becomes regenerate by abstaining from the evils of sin, and shunning them as one would an infernal horde with torches in hand endeavoring to overtake you and throw you on a burning pile [pyre?]." Isn't that a great illustration? To me, that shows more than anything else what we're up against and how vigilant we need to be in not playing with those early delights, and saying "no" and walking away.

Watch. Pray. And walk away.

When adults are in evil behavior, it doesn't just start full-blown one day. It begins with what's called "spiritual adultery," which we're all capable of. It's that haggling over price that we talked about. It's entertaining the thought, taking it a little bit further.

Here's one example of how it might begin. Maybe you're at home and you're preparing a dinner for your spouse. And your spouse is late. So you have a feeling - it's called "irritation" – inside. You get irritated. That feeling needs to marry itself with some ideas that support it, so you think, "Oh he's always late. He's so inconsiderate." And now we have an adulterous union of a bad feeling and a bad thought. Now it starts to take root in us. So maybe your husband or wife comes home, and they don't acknowledge that they were late, and they don't acknowledge that you're upset, and you start to get mad now. You were irritated before, and now you're angry. More ideas align themselves with that feeling, and you have another adulterous union. "He's not like Kate's husband – *he's* so considerate." And so on. These things that we tell ourselves create this adulterous union.

You get to the point where you start to say, "Well, maybe I just married the wrong person. Maybe this is just the wrong person for me." You see how it starts to worm its way into your life, and starts to drive you apart. This is one simple example of things that happen all the time.

When you have that feeling of irritation, try to stop it right there. One thing you can do is feed your mind with true ideas – things you do know about your spouse that are true, that

you do admire. Replace the negative with them, and try to drive that destructive marriage out of yourself. And the Lord will help you with that.

On the other hand, the marriage – true marriage – on earth descends from the marriage of good and truth in heaven. It's a model of what we're striving for – trying to join together true ideas and good intentions within ourselves. And that starts by shunning those lustful thoughts, those negative thoughts, those evil thoughts, as they enter our mind, and as they enter our heart. When you do that, the Lord tells us, we enter into the opposite good – into integrity, purity, chastity, and so on.

When good thoughts come, entertain those good thoughts. Learn true ideas and entertain them. Meditate on them. In the Lord's Word truth is symbolized by weapons. Things like swords and arrows. Now why is that? Because truth has the power to fight against those things in our life. So it's important to learn them and it's important to use those truths. Like David, in the story of Goliath. He had a little bag full of smooth stones which picture truths in our mind that we've thought about, that we've tried to live by. They become smoothed by that, as we meditate over them and dwell on them. Pull them out and fight against the enemy.

I want you to think about your mind like a house. You get to decide how it's going to be furnished- what kinds of things you put in there. That's up to you. Now evil spirits can knock on the door and say, "Hey, I think you should put this in your house." And you could say, "Oh, okay," or you can say, "No, I don't want that." That's your choice completely. It's your house, you can keep it clean. That's up to you as well. They're not going to clean it for you. You have to clean it yourself.

So our goal this week is to honor marriage. This week we'll have an opportunity to learn more about this in the *Rise Above It* reading, and talking about it in those small groups. A marriage, as the Lord says, can be an unending source of joy, deep bliss, and happiness. And the Lord created it so that we can find happiness.

Some people experienced the marriage weekend in Bryn Athyn this past year and were brought to tears of joy and delight over what they experienced, because they remembered what that relationship was like. They remembered why they got married, they remembered the love that the Lord put in their hearts for one another. And it was brought to the surface. And they felt joy over that. So you can know that it's possible. We have a memory so that we can not only remember the bad things about ourselves, but the good things, and the love that we feel about them. So use your memory positively, as well.

The Writings for the New Church say that this love – talking about marriage love, conjugal love – is the fundamental love of all loves. All joys and all delights have been gathered into it, from the first to the last of them. All blessings, felicities, delights, gratifications and pleasure which could ever have been conferred on humankind by the Lord the Creator, have been gathered into this love. That's the promise from the Lord, that can be. But it can't be, if we don't shun the adultery that turns us away from receiving that, in all the different ways that it enters us.

I just want to end with a quote from the *Proverbs – Proverbs 5*. It's a nice picture of being committed to your spouse. It says:

*Drink water from your own cistern,  
And running water from your own well.  
Should your fountains be dispersed abroad,  
Streams of water in the streets?  
Let them be only your own,  
And not for strangers with you.  
Let your fountain be blessed,  
And rejoice with the wife of your youth.  
As a loving deer and a graceful doe,  
Let her breasts satisfy you at all times;  
And always be enraptured with her love.*

Amen.