

Eye-Adultery and Heart-Adultery

Matthew 5:27-30

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The divine institution of marriage is under attack presently in a way that it has never been. Whereas in Western culture there has generally existed a biblical foundation for marriage (at least until the 1950s), from 1960s to the present, a seismic shift began. Biblical or even traditional standards for marriage are being removed for allegedly being oppressive.

The standard of the present evil age is not Scripture or any other standard outside you. You are the standard of what is right and wrong; the standard of what marriage means; what gender means or how many genders there are. You are the standard for what kinds of sexual relationships are right for you. You are a god and a law unto yourself.

Black Lives Matter had on its official website, at least until September of 2020, the following: “We disrupt [read, “destroy”] the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure requirement.”

Parents, if ever you needed to teach and model what is a God-ordained marriage, it is now. Powerful satanic forces are working to destroy the divine institution of marriage entirely.

The Church is only as strong as the marriages within it. We are either building or destroying the kingdom of God as we either build or destroy our marriages. Will our children be afraid to marry because of the anger, bitterness, unfaithfulness, and conflict they have witnessed in our marriages? Or will they desire to have a godly Christian marriage because of the love and order they have seen in our marriages? We are either building or destroying the kingdom of God through our marriages. Our main points from our text today are: (1) The Pharisees’ False Interpretation of the Seventh Commandment (Matthew 5:27); (2) Christ’s True Interpretation of the Seventh Commandment (Matthew 5:28-30).

I. The Pharisees’ False Interpretation of the Seventh Commandment (Matthew 5:27).

A. Jesus rejects the notion that believers have no further obligation to keep God’s Moral Law (the Ten Commandments). For Jesus declares that He came not to destroy God’s Moral Law, but to fulfill it (make it full through His teaching and obedience)—even keeping the least of God’s commandments (Matthew 5:17-19). The Pharisees viewed themselves as law-keepers because they externally obeyed it, but Jesus says they were law-breakers because their obedience to God’s Law began not in the heart in loving it. Unless our obedience (righteousness) goes beyond that which is merely outward (like that of the Pharisees) none of us will enter the kingdom of God (Matthew 5:20). Jesus then gives six illustrations (Matthew 5:21-48) to show the false interpretation of the Pharisees (“Ye have heard that it was said”) and His divine interpretation of God’s Law (“But I say unto you”). Jesus is not rejecting God’s Moral Law—He is making it full and complete by interpreting it accurately.

B. We considered the first illustration in Matthew 5:21-26. The Pharisees believed they had kept the Sixth Commandment as long as they did not physically commit murder. But Jesus reveals that God’s Law forbids heart-murder (inward anger and bitterness) as well as tongue-murder (angry words and name calling). So likewise the Pharisees believed they had kept the Seventh Commandment as long as they did not physically commit adultery. Their oral tradition emphasized the outward obedience that God’s Law requires. Whereas Jesus emphasized that obedience begins with a heart of love for God and His Law that has been transformed by the power of the Spirit through the gospel.

C. **“Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time.”** This was what the oral tradition of the Jews taught: **“Thou shalt not commit adultery”** (it stopped there with the mere outward act of sexual immorality with one who is not your spouse). That is what the commandment states, but that is not all that the commandment means (as Jesus will reveal). Because the Pharisees neither outwardly murdered nor outwardly committed adultery, they believed they were obedient and righteous before God (Luke 18:11). Jesus had a different judgment of the Pharisees (Matthew 23:27-28). Were the words of Jesus cruel? No! They were true and revealed their unrighteousness and desperate need for Christ’s righteousness and forgiveness (as the doctor reveals there is an infection in order that you may be healed). There is no hope for us until we see our utter moral corruption. This the Law does and Jesus did.

II. **Christ’s True Interpretation of the Seventh Commandment (Matthew 5:28-30).**

A. **“But I say unto you.”** Jesus does not weaken God’s Law, but upholds its authority in giving the Seventh Commandment its true interpretation to the whole person (inwardly and outwardly). Rather than doing away with the Law, Jesus reveals how God’s Law penetrates to the innermost part of our being—it judges our thoughts, desires, and intentions. Before outward adultery is committed, inward adultery by way of lust and sinful imaginations has already been committed. This was always the true interpretation of the Seventh Commandment, The Pharisees had weakened it this commandment. Jesus does not replace it or weaken it. He strengthens and upholds it as the Lord ever intended.

B. To lust is to covet with sexual desires someone who is not your spouse. It is to want what is not yours for your own pleasure.

1. What the Law condemns is not merely looking at a woman/man and acknowledging that she/he is attractive (Rebekah in Genesis 24:16 and David in 1 Samuel 17:42), but looking with sexual desires, thoughts, and imaginations (“in order to lust”—purpose clause). It doesn’t matter whether it is someone literally in your presence, or on TV, on your computer, or in a magazine. It doesn’t matter whether that person is married or not, whether you are married or not, or whether that person is of a different sex or of the same sex. The only person with whom God says you are to have such desires for intimacy is your husband or wife (Proverbs 5:18-19). Intimacy in marriage (whether in thought or deed) is good, but intimacy outside of marriage (whether in thought or deed) is here condemned by the Lord Jesus (which includes not only intimacy with someone to whom you are not married, but intimacy with yourself because that it is not intimacy with your spouse).

2. Jesus reveals that lust begins in our sinful hearts not with the physical act (Matthew 15:18-19). And that lust within the heart is fed through what we see with our eyes (Proverbs 27:20). Then the lust in the heart grows, and wants more and more visual stimulation (it becomes a vicious cycle and leads to an uncontrolled sinful addiction). Though the eyes are the primary way to feed lust, let us not think lust cannot be fed with music, coarse jokes, and lustful stories as well (Ephesians 5:3-4). There are so many ways to feed those lustful desires in the heart, and lust will seek out as many ways as possible to be fed. As we shall see, the only way to destroy lust is to starve it—not feed it.

C. Why is it so important that you understand that lust is heart-adultery and eye-adultery?

1. It is a violation of God’s Holy Law—God’s standard of righteousness (the Seventh Commandment). We cannot ignore or excuse sin in our hearts any more than sin with our mouths, hands, or feet. We cannot honor God if we do not love His commandments (John 14:15).

2. Jesus says it is a grievous sin, even if it is hidden in the heart. To downplay heart adultery and eye-adultery is setting us up for a big fall. To look but not touch is a lie of the enemy. How many ministers have fallen into outward sexual sins because they did not guard their hearts and their eyes (King David)?

3. We must hate adultery (sexual immorality) where it begins (within the heart) and how it is primarily fed (through the eyes and ears)—Psalm 119:104. But we must also love a pure heart. Without a holy hatred of sin and a holy love for truth and righteousness, there will never be a real change in your heart. You show your hatred for sin and love for Jesus and His commandments by taking these matters seriously (fearing God), by repenting, by seeking forgiveness, and by endeavoring new obedience. Your righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees or Jesus says we'll not enter God's kingdom (Matthew 5:20). Is there hope for you if you battle these sins throughout the day? Absolutely (1 Corinthians 6:11; 1 Corinthians 10:13)!

4. It is a matter of loyalty and faithfulness to your marriage promises if you are married. You are to honor and love your spouse, first by how you treat him/her in your heart. To whom is your heart devoted—to your spouse or to some immoral fantasy in your heart that you feed with your eyes? How many movies that you watch promote and justify lustful desires? That is feeding lust in your own heart. If you are filled with lust and feeding it, you are breaking your marriage promise to be faithful to your spouse. Lust in the heart may not be a ground for divorce, but it is indeed taking up another lover in your heart and is unfaithfulness to your marriage covenant to which God is a witness. If you are single, these matters are likewise a matter of loyalty and faithfulness to your future spouse, and if you never marry, it is unfaithfulness to Jesus Christ with another lover. Do you want your future spouse feeding the lusts of the flesh? If not, do likewise.

D. Jesus closes this second illustration by teaching us how we are to treat such sexual temptations and sins (Matthew 5:29-30).

1. To pluck out the right eye and cast it away and to cut off the right hand and cast it away is hyperbole (an exaggeration to make a point); for a one-eyed person and a one-handed person can still be overcome with heart-adultery and eye-adultery. Jesus is making the point that these immoral sexual desires must be seen as having the power to cast us into hell—they're not insignificant or minor. Therefore, take them seriously. Just as you would need to remove an eye or a hand that had become seriously infected with some contagious bacteria in order to prevent the spread of that infection to the loss of your physical life, so you will need to take as seriously the removal of what your eye sees and what your hand turns on or what your ear listens to in order to prevent the spread of that immoral infection to the loss of your spiritual life. Dear ones, you evidence your faith in Jesus Christ by how seriously you take the sin in your life. Amputation is very serious, but it is spiritual amputation (mortification) that is needed when it comes to cutting off all the temptations that feed the lust within. Feed the lust, and it will grow. Starve the lust, and it will die.

2. This is not a mere mechanical surgery that you perform by yourself upon yourself.

a. It is not your power but trusting in the power of God's Spirit that you are already dead to these sins and temptations through your union with Christ (Romans 6:6,11). You are delivered from the guilt, condemnation, and power of sin through your union with Jesus Christ.

b. Through your communion with Christ daily, you call upon Him for His strength to say "No" to the temptation and "Yes" to the grace and help of the Lord. Luther said that we cannot keep birds from flying over our heads, but we can keep them from building a nest in our hair. Daily communion with Christ is a love feast in prayer, reading and meditation upon the Word that cleanses and strengthens you against the enemy (Psalm 119:9-11). Replace the lustful thoughts with Scripture.

c. Seek out accountability from a trusted and mature Christian friend who will pray with you and regularly check in on you.

d. If you are neglecting the means God has appointed for your deliverance, don't expect remarkable results.

e. When you long more to be set free and to live a life of purity to the honor of Jesus Christ than you do to indulge the lusts of the flesh, you will find God's grace more than sufficient for you.

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