

The Messiah Has Come
Week 18
Matthew 5:27-32
“Matters of the Heart (Part 2)”
“Your Cheatin’ Heart”

Introduction

“Haven’t you read,” He replied, “that He Who created them in the beginning made them male and female, and He also said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.” **Matthew 19:4-6**

The Word of God has a lot to say about marriage... and sexual conduct. Both marriage and sex were created by God and were intended to form a perfect and lasting covenant between a husband and wife. The first marriage was performed in the Garden of Eden, and it was God Himself, Who presented Eve to Adam (**Genesis 2:22**). (By the way, that is why the father of the bride always gives her away during a wedding ceremony.) God’s plan for marriage and sexual union was perfect, but like everything else, fallen men living in a fallen world have corrupted them.

When Christ covered these matters in His *Sermon on the Mount*, it flew in the face of the traditions handed down by the Pharisees. For, as we have preciously seen, they were far more interested in keeping the letter of The Law than they were in keeping the intent of The Law. I once heard a story about actor/comedian, W. C. Fields, who was an avowed sinner and non-believer. It is said that an associate caught him one day reading his *Bible* and was astonished. He asked the comedian what he was doing. To which he replied, “*Looking for loopholes, my boy, looking for loopholes.*”

The Pharisees believed that if they could shape the Law of Moses a certain way, even re-interpret it so that it would better suit them, then they could, by their own achievement, be pleasing to God. Christ did not allow them to get away with this folly, for He showed them the standards by which God gave the Law in the first place. And those standards were far loftier than anyone could even imagine, for God is far more concerned with the heart of a man and his inward thoughts and desires than He is with his outward actions or appearances, for it is the inward desire that drives us to commit sin.

No one undergoing a trial should say, “I am being tempted by God,” since God is not tempted by evil, and He Himself doesn’t tempt anyone. But each person is tempted when he is drawn away and enticed by his own evil desire. Then after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death. **James 1:13-15**

So obviously, it is a heart condition that motivates people to do what they do. And although outwardly, they may not do what they desire, their inward motivations “give them away”, so to speak, in the eyes of God. He sees what others cannot. He knows our hearts, while others can only imagine what is going on inside. Some are able to fool many by acting righteous. The Pharisees were masters of this. However, Jesus always saw right through them.

While He was in Jerusalem during the Passover festival, many believed in His Name when they saw the signs He was doing. Jesus, however, would not entrust Himself to them, since He knew them all and because He did not need anyone to testify about man; for He Himself knew what was in man. **John 2:23-25**

Wow! Did you catch that? There were people who claimed to be Believers, but Jesus knew better than to entrust Himself to them. Why? Because He could see that their belief was merely a

superficial one. He could see right through outward actions into their inner motives, and you may be able to fool a lot of folks, but you cannot pull one over on God! So, in the Sermon on the Mount, Christ exposes the inner workings of the sinful heart. The part that God will use to judge our works when we stand before Him. And in that department, we all stand accused.

Today, in this second installment of His sermon that I have entitled “Matters of The Heart”, we will look to the standards for a Godly marriage, at how we see ourselves, juxtaposed against how God sees us. So, let us look together at this passage on *Cheatin’ Hearts*, *Cuttin’ Off Parts*, and *Cullin’ Your Sweetheart*.

Cheatin’ Hearts (vs. 27-28)

You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery. But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Matthew 5:27-28

Several years ago, I got a sales call from a woman who wanted to sell me a magazine subscription to *Sport’s Illustrated*. I’m a pretty big sports fan, so I listened carefully to her proposal and was actually thinking of buying. Sensing that she had my interest, she threw out her last sales pitch that she just knew would reel me in for good. She said, “And included with your subscription, you will receive both our swimsuit calendar, as well as our famous swimsuit edition.” (In case you are blissfully unaware, this is the annual edition of *Sport’s Illustrated* that is filled cover to cover with half naked models clad in the skimpiest of swimwear.)

I paused for a moment, and then I asked her, “This is *Sport’s Illustrated* magazine correct?” She seemed confused by the question, and replied, “Yes sir.” Then I asked her, “Can you tell me what year it was the **lust** was officially recognized as a sport?” She had no answer for this, just a lot of stammering, as she was realizing that she had probably used the wrong bait to reel in this hick from the Bible Belt! I went on to explain to her that I was a happily married man, and the only woman that God intended for me to look at in that way was my wife of several years now. I thanked her for her time and ended the call. I have often wondered what she thought after I hung up. Did she make fun of me to all her co-workers, or did she deep down wish she had someone who loved her enough to have eyes only for her?

You see, God intended for a husband and wife to know each other in such an intimate way that no one else could ever know. It was His design for an unbreakable relationship that was purely theirs. That is why adulterous behavior is such a terrible sin. In fact, in *The Old Testament*, it was punishable by death.

If a man commits adultery with a married woman — if he commits adultery with his neighbor’s wife — both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.

Leviticus 20:10

If you’ve ever wondered about God’s opinion of a cheating spouse, there it is, you need look no further.

In Christ’s day, the times of stoning for adulterers were pretty much at an end. Oh, they threatened it from time to time (**See John 8:1-11**), but for the most part, adultery was just used as grounds for divorce. Not many people, the Pharisees included, had a problem with a person having lustful thoughts, or wandering eyes, just as long as that was where they drew the line. Once again, they preached following the letter of the Law, while ignoring the Law’s intent. God wanted married people to be loyal to one another. So much so, that the thought of even desiring another partner was reprehensible to Him and should be to us as well.

Why do you think this is? I will be happy to tell you why. Have you ever felt inadequate? Like somehow you weren’t enough? One of the worst feelings on earth, is it not? I have had times in my life that I didn’t feel like I was worth very much. Can I get a witness? When I feel like I’m unworthy, or even unnecessary, there are two places that I can go for encouragement. I can go to my Heavenly Father, Who loves me in spite of myself. And I can go to the woman I have been married to for nearly forty years.

Those are the places that I can go to feel like my life matters to someone. Now imagine if those places made me feel inadequate as well. Where else could I turn then?

Lusting after someone else when you are married makes your spouse feel **inadequate**, and as for you men, let me tell you why that is such a terrible sin.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the Word.

Ephesians 5:25-26

That is the standard. So don't tell me you love your wife like Christ loved the church, and yet, you have no problem causing her to feel the pain that comes with knowing that she is not enough for you. And ladies, the same thing applies to you as well. To look with lust is to demonstrate to all that you have a cheating heart. God expects, in fact commands, us to look to our spouses as our only source of sexual attraction and desire.

Does this mean that you cannot notice if someone else is attractive? Of course not. If you can see, then you can recognize beauty. Adultery is not in the noticing, it is in the second look that longs to have what you see. It is the desire to taste the forbidden fruit. Lust isn't about the noticing. It's about wanting, the longing to have something that is not yours to have. So if you have a cheating heart, then in God's eyes, you are a cheater *at heart*! That is the standard by which we are judged.

Cuttin' Off Parts (vs. 29-30)

If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Matthew 5:29-30

I once read about a young man who had a problem with lust and took this verse literally and gouged out his own eye and cut off his own hand. I suppose I would give him an "A" for commitment, but an "F" for common sense! Jesus is speaking metaphorically here, not literally. After all, if it is a lustful heart that is the problem, then gouging out your right eye wouldn't solve anything. You'd just look lustfully with your other eye.

To the Jewish way of thinking, the right eye symbolized your best vision, and your right hand, your strong hand. What Christ is actually saying here is that once we recognize the sin in our lives, then we should be willing to go to any lengths to eradicate it. After all:

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Matthew 5:8

The Bible is clear, there will not be any adulterers in heaven:

Don't you know that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom? Do not be deceived: No sexually immoral people, idolators, adulterers, or males who have sex with males, no thieves, greedy people, drunkards, verbally abusive people, or swindlers will inherit God's kingdom. And some of you used to be like this. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the Name of The LORD Jesus Christ by The Spirit of our God.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

So, how is it then, that we are to radically remove the parts of our body that lead us to sin. How can we purge the eyes that look with lust and the hands that long to touch that which is forbidden? Good question! Let me answer it this way. Back in the 70's and 80's there was a television campaign that was meant to discourage kids from taking drugs. There was an image of an egg with a voice that said, "This is

your brain.” Then the egg was broken and dropped into a hot skillet, and the voice said, “And this is your brain on drugs.” Now, I’m not sure if the campaign worked, for there is still a great deal of drug abuse in this country, but I would like to use a similar analogy.

In order to radically change your heart, you must yield it over to a power much greater than yourself, for our hearts are naturally prone to wickedness. So here goes:

This is *your* heart:

Now the works of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, moral impurity, promiscuity, idolatry, sorcery, hatreds, strife, jealousy, outburst of anger, selfish ambitions, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and anything similar. **Galatians 5:19-21a**

And this is *your* heart... *on Jesus*:

But the fruit of The Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The Law is not against such things. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. **Galatians 5:22-24**

Did you catch that? To belong to Christ is to be radically changed, and to crucify the flesh (there’s that radical removal of our rogue body parts He mentioned). We yield ourselves over to The Spirit, and we do whatever is necessary to get our flesh under control, for the fruit of The Spirit is *self-control*. The same power that rose Jesus from the dead, lives within every Believer (**Romans 8:11**). So you **do** have what it takes to control your fleshly desires. So as the famous commercial says: *Just do it!*

Cullin’ Your Sweetheart (vs. 31-32)

It was also said, Whoever divorces his wife must give her a written notice of divorce. But I tell you, everyone who divorces his wife, except in a case of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. **Matthew 5:31-32**

The Pharisees liked to throw the phrase around, “*Thus sayeth The LORD..*” followed by whatever oral commandments they had in store. Note how Christ counters this with, “***But I tell you...***” You see, they liked to quote The LORD, but He ***is*** The LORD! The Word of God is *His* Word. He is the authority of Scripture in the flesh (**John 1:14**). His authority cannot be questioned. And His standards are far superior to those of self-righteous men.

In the Law of Moses, there was a provision for a man to divorce his wife. But it was a limited one. It had to do with indecent behavior.

If a man marries a woman, but she becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, he may write her a divorce certificate, hand it to her, and send her away from his house. **Deuteronomy 24:1**

The Hebrew used for the word “indecent” is “*ervah*”, and it carries with it the notion of nakedness or lewd behavior. Now remember, this isn’t about adultery, because under the Law, adultery was punishable by death. And having a dead spouse would certainly qualify a person to marry again! No, this was something different entirely. The term is broad in one sense, but narrow in the fact that God only allowed people to put aside their marriage vows for something that was sexually shameful, and therefore embarrassing. Bathsheba bathing out in the open where other men (like David) could lust after her comes to mind as an example.

So divorces were granted by God albeit on a very limited scope. But the Pharisees, had taken the Law of Moses and stood it on its head. They concentrated on the legalistic matter and completely ignored the limited grounds for such action. In other words, as long as the written certificate was issued

according to the Law, divorce could be granted for any reason. Something as trivial as if a wife burned her husband's dinner would be considered legal grounds for divorce! Jesus was vehemently opposed to this divorce for any cause or standard set by the oral traditions of the Pharisees.

God intended for husbands and wives to work their problems out, not to bail on the marriage the first time any storm clouds appear upon the horizon. As a pastor who counsels couples having marital issues, I cannot tell you how disgusted I am of hearing people say over and over again, their reason for defying God's commandment is *"Because I am unhappy, and I know that God would want me to be happy."* I defy anyone to show me the Scripture that says, "God promises to see to it that everyone is always happy." Trust me friends, it ain't in there! Life is hard. In fact, it is supposed to be. And guess what? Sometimes marriage is hard. God never promised us an easy road, but what He did promise is to never leave us stranded alone on the road. There is not a single marriage problem that cannot be solved by two people fully submitting themselves to God and to each other. I need to stop here, because this subject always gets me pretty heated up.

Simply put, to set aside the one that you stood before God and vowed to love for as long as you live, and then think it is ok to love another... is called *adultery*. And it was punishable by death in *The Old Testament*. Maybe it's time we started fearing God a little more and started fearing unhappiness a little less. After all, **to be dead to self is to stop worrying about how good things are going for us and to focus upon doing what God has called us to do!**

That being said, there are Scriptural grounds for divorce. Adultery, because it no longer carries the death penalty for one. And according to the Apostle Paul, if someone becomes a Believer, and for *that reason* their spouse no longer wants to be with them, then they are allowed to let them go, and are free to remarry (***1 Corinthians 7:15***). I am loathe to add a single thing to The Scriptures, but I would also counsel a woman who is being physically abused by her husband to get away from him.

Any other reason for divorce other than what is given in Scripture is insufficient on its face. In other words, you have no legitimate grounds, and God will not be a party to it. And those who choose to ignore the commandments of Scripture and break the vows they made before God will be held accountable. Simple as that.

So is divorce the unpardonable sin? No, but repentance is required for *all* sin. So many second marriages are struggling today, because I believe they have never repented of the sins they committed in their first marriage. And by the way, more second marriages end in divorce than firsts. So what does that say about people's ability to know what's best for themselves? How many times have we heard, "If I could just cut this guy/gal loose, I know I would be happy." Baloney! You cannot be happy in rebellion against the commands of God.

Scripture is clear. Marriage is supposed to be a lifelong commitment. Not something that can be set aside on a whim. Make no mistake, God holds us to the vows we make before Him.

When you make a vow to God, don't delay fulfilling it, because He does not delight in fools. Fulfill what you vow. Better that you do not vow than that you vow and not fulfill it. Do not let your mouth bring guilt on you, and do not say in the presence of the messenger that it was a mistake. Why should God be angry with you words and destroy the work of your hands? For many dreams bring futility; so do many words. Therefore, fear God. **Ecclesiastes 5:4-7**

We need to fear God more, and fear unhappiness less! For:

How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked or stand in the pathway with sinners or sit in the company of mockers! Instead, his delight is in the LORD'S instruction, and he meditates on it day and night. He is like a tree planted beside flowing streams that bears its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. **Psalms 1:1-3**

TRUTH!!!