

Adultery & Lust: Hands, Hearts, & Hellfire

Matthew 5:27-30

Introduction – The same pattern continues, as Jesus teaches us how we are to biblically apply His law. Now, dealing with the seventh commandment, we see once again the Pharisees taking the letter of the law and reducing it down to one particular matter. But Jesus teaches that obedience is not simply a matter of external conformity. It is about heart-loyalty. *D. Martin Lloyd-Jones – “The Lord emphasized the depth or power of sin. Sin is not merely actions or deeds – it is something within the heart that leads to the action. We must concentrate not so much on sins as sin.”*

The Teaching – (v27). There are not any additions to the commandment this time, but there were understood qualifications to the text. Twisting scriptures, the Pharisees limited the prohibition to the actual act of sexual immorality with a married person (Lev. 18:20 – “...you shall not lie carnally with your neighbor’s wife”), and that God would not notice your thought life (Psalm 66:18 – “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear...”). We may be tempted to laugh at their technicalities, but this is always the way sinners justify their sin – “Has God indeed said...”

The Full Teaching – (v28). Jesus will have nothing with our ‘technicalities’. Outward conformity is never all God wants. He wants your heart.

The law has always meant that the iniquity boiling in your heart is an offense to God, whether it comes out or not. “*For as a man thinks, so is he*” – Prov 23:7. You tell me your thoughts, and I will tell you what kind of a man you are. It was the evil intents and thoughts of the heart that convinced the Lord to flood the earth (Gen 6:5).

Therefore, to lust after a woman is to commit adultery with her. ‘Decent’ people do not like this teaching, because this application makes *all* men adulterers. Holiness requires that we not even desire to sin (Prov 24:8-9, Psalm 50:15-18). You will be called to account for your idle words, and your thoughts in the Day of Judgment. Are you prepared?

Real Hellfire Warnings – (vv29-30). The objector says, “Why, that’s impossible. Who can stop immoral thoughts. How can I avoid looking at a woman and being attracted? Why, I’d have to....” That is the point. How seriously do you take sin? Do you treat sin as your most dangerous enemy? Martin Luther said you can’t keep birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from making a nest in your hair. Are lustful thoughts immediately escorted out, or do you make room for them, feed them, protect them, hide them, make them safe and comfortable and ‘at home’.

The warning is real. It is true that we are justified by grace alone through faith alone, and that all those who are justified will be glorified. It is true, therefore, that no justified person will ever be lost. Nevertheless, those who give themselves over to impurity will be lost (Gal 5:19-21). Justifying faith is a persevering faith, so those who do not pursue holiness will not see the Lord (Heb 12:14). Those who forsake the fight against lust will perish (Col 3:5-6, Matt 5:30).

The Real Problem – We know that Jesus is speaking metaphorically. Cutting out one eye or one hand wouldn’t stop a sinner. This is why He says “if”. Look back on verse 28. The offending member is not the eye or the hand. It is the heart. And what comes out of the heart? “*For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies*” – Matt 15:19.

Again, Lloyd-Jones – “*Evangelism must start with the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, the demands of the law, the punishment meted out by the law and the eternal consequences of evil and wrong doing. It is only the man who is brought to see his guilt in this way who flies to Christ for deliverance and redemption.*”

The Real Solution – Your heart is dirty and must be washed. “*O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you?*” – Jer 4:14. How are you going to wash the inside?

But it is worse than that. Your heart is dead and you must be born again (John 3:1-8). How are you going to be born again? How are you going to control the wind?

Remember Psalm 50:15 – “*Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.*” Carefully consider as well Ezekiel 36:26.

Jesus calls His followers to obey His law all the way down in our hearts. If we are unable, we must cry out for new hearts. We must confess our sins if we have drifted into compromise and look to Him for all our righteousness.

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