

A MATTER OF THE HEART

Matthew 5:27-30

I. INTRODUCTION

II. THE TEXT—Matthew 5:27-30

KJV—27 Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: 28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. 29 And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. 30 And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell.

NIV—27 You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

NASB—27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY’; 28 but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. “ 29 If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. “ 30 If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.

III. EXPLANATION

A. GENERAL OBSERVATION ABOUT THE SIX ANTI-THESIS

1. This sin is like all those in the second table

a. It can be summarized in one law

1. Love your neighbor as yourself

2. **Read**—**Rom 13:8-10**

8 Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* law. 9 For this, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET,” and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, “YOU LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.” 10 Love does no wrong to a

SHALL
neighbor;

therefore love is the fulfillment of *the* law.

b. So—expansion of the physical sin to imagination—can be applied to all these sins

2. Inner motivation

- a. Again Jesus is concerned with inner motivation
- b. As with murder—when Jesus was concerned with anger in the heart
- c. Here—He is concerned with sexual feelings in the heart

B. JESUS AND THE COMMAND AGAINST ADULTERY

1. General Graeco-Roman culture

- a. Generally accepted that men could have sexual adventures with unmarried women
- b. Only sexual relations with married women were wrong—they were another man's property
- c. Women were to remain chaste before and after marriage

2. By contrast--the Old Testament law

- a. Forbade adultery of any kind—by men or women
- b. So Jesus' reference to this Law was more expansive than Gentile cultural norms

3. Jesus' expands the application

- a. **'Every'** person who looks at **'a woman'**—this is any man looking at any woman
- b. He does not limit the subject to married men—or the object only being married women
- c. He expands context to fullest possible limits
 1. Jesus assumes what His culture assumed
 - a. No woman—married or otherwise—was allowed to have sex outside marriage
 - b. That a man was allowed to have sex with his own wife—but no married woman
 2. Now Jesus says no man—married or unmarried—should have sex with any other woman
- d. Conclusion: nobody was to have sex outside marriage with anyone else!

C. DO NOT 'COMMIT ADULTERY'

1. Definition

- a. μοιχευω = being unfaithful
- b. Derived from μοιχος = one who is unfaithful—and adulterer
 1. Physically—having sexual relations with another person's wife

2. Spiritually—idolatry—being unfaithful to God—drawn away by one offering food to idols

2. Adultery in OT

a. Used of idolatry against God—**Jer 3:6-10**

6 Then the LORD said to me in the days of Josiah the king, “Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there. **7** I thought, ‘After she has done all these things she will return to Me’; but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. **8** And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also. **9** Because of the lightness of her harlotry, she polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. **10** Yet in spite of all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception,” declares the LORD.

b. Especially in Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea

D. LOOKING WITH LUST

1. Looking at = **βλεπω προς το**

a. Not just ‘looking at’—but ‘looking towards’

1. Not just a passing glance—but gazing at

2. What this means = looking at with a purposeful intention behind the look

a. Like—**Matthew 6:1**

- When doing a righteous act with purposeful intention to be seen
- This is wrong—because there is an ulterior motive behind the act—to be seen

b. Likewise—it is wrong to look at someone—with another purposeful intention

b. Two possible interpretations

1. Looking at a woman with another intention—purposefully intending to commit adultery

2. Looking at a woman in such a way—that purposefully invites her to commit adultery

c. Either way—the intention here is lustful (**επιθυμια**)

2. **επιθυμια** = longing for, desire, covet what is forbidden

a. Jesus extends sin from just the physical action to the imagination/heart

b. He means this = sin begins with purposeful intention—lust

c. Like **James 1:14-15**

14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. **15** Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

d. This lust is not just sexual in **James 4**—but also relates to any kind of sin

1 What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? **2** You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel.

3. Jesus does not condemn sex

- He does not oppose being attracted to beauty
- He does not oppose sexual arousal
- He condemns only the illicit—being sexually aroused by someone other than one’s mate

E. IN HIS HEART

1. καρδια = innermost being

- a. Sin in the heart—inverts the sixth beatitude—“blessed are the pure in heart”
- b. “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also”—**Mt 6**
- c. “It is what is inside that makes a man unclean”—**Mk 7**
- d. “Man sees the outside—God sees the heart”—**I Sam 16:7**

2. The ‘heart’—is the center of spiritual life—that drives everything else

F. RIGHT EYE AND RIGHT HAND

1. Right

- a. The favored side in ancient—and middle Eastern—culture
- b. A warrior was considered especially handicapped if he lost sight in right eye

2. Body parts

1. The Eye

- a. What attracts a person first to lust—the ‘look’
- b. “The eye is the lamp of the body”—later in **Matthew 6**
 - If the eye is good—then you are full of light

- If the eye is bad—then you are full of darkness!
2. Hand—the instrument that takes action
 - a. Here the hand is representative of the whole body
 - b. What the eye has seen—the heart imagines—the hand enacts
 - c. The hand converts imagination to physical action

G. IF IT OFFENDS YOU

1. σκανδαλιζω = scandalizes
 - a. ‘scandal’—in Greek
 1. Basic meaning = a ‘trap’ set to ensnare a person/animal
 2. Second meaning = put a stumbling-block or impediment in the way
 3. Third meaning = cause to fall away

Reason: it causes one to distrust—or to desert—one who should be trusted and obeyed
 4. Fifth meaning = to cause displeasure—annoyance—indignant
 - They were offended by Jesus in Nazareth—Mk 6:3
 - “You will all fall away”—Mk 14:27
 - b. Adultery—*is* a scandal—in every respect!!!
 1. A trap—that ensnares us in wrongful behavior
 2. A stumbling block—an impediment—causes us to sin
 3. Causing to fall away—breach of trust—with one’s spouse
 4. Causing displeasure—annoyance—indignant response—from everyone involved

H. CUT OFF AND THROW AWAY

1. Parallel passages for **verse s29-30**
 - **Mark 9:42-40**—If anyone causes one of the children who believe in me to sin . . .
 - **Matthew 19**—parallels Mark 9
2. Hyperbole—not advocating self-mutilation
 - But taking every step to prevent sin

- Separating from whatever causes to sin
3. Actual remedy cannot be self-mutilation
 - a. Because blinding one eye does not prevent further sin—still have one eye!!
 - b. Even total blindness—or being maimed/crippled—does not prevent lust!
 - c. Rather—Jesus means—stop whatever encourages the eye to lust!
 - d. The real problem is the heart!!!
 4. So—the thrust of the hyperbole is this:
 - a. Take such action—while you have a will to do so—so that lust will never bother you again
 - b. Put away anything that can cause the heart to lust—anything that invites it to causes you to sin

I. BETTER TO DO THIS THAN TO GO TO HELL

1. Context
 - **5:20**—unless your righteousness exceeds . . . you will not enter the kingdom of heaven
 - **5:22**—punishment for calling someone a fool—danger of hell
2. Again—this is reinforced by **James 1**
 - 1:15**—Then when lust hath conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death.
3. Notice—this text assumes forgiveness of sin
 - One sins by looking lustfully—or/and committing adultery
 - One takes radical step(s) to prevent further sin
 - One still can avoid hell