

Adultery in the Heart

Call to Worship: Psalm 119:137-144

Hymn #225- *Rejoice the Lord is King!*

1st Scripture: 2 Samuel 11

Hymn Insert- *Speak O Lord*

2nd Scripture: Matthew 5:27-30

Hymn #582- *My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*

Introduction

This morning, we move on to address the second of our Lords, “You have heard it said...but I say to you,” commands, addressing the matter of “adultery in the heart.” And as we examine this commandment, let us again remember, that, throughout the course of all six of these commands, our Lord is laying down, one, primary, underlying principle, which rests at the foundation of all of God’s Law, namely, the fact that God is concerned first with the “spirit of the law,” over and above the “letter of the law.” And so, our Lord is not changing, adding to, or improving upon the Law of Moses, in any way, shape or form (which would contradict everything that He had just said about not coming to abrogate it), but rather, He is salvaging it from the corrupt ways, in which, the religious leaders (the Scribes and the Pharisees) have misinterpreted it. To this end, He exposes the true nature of the Law, which was always meant to get down to the heart and motives of man.

And so, this morning, we move on to consider the matter of adultery, and how our Lord exposes the true nature of this wicked vice, found not only in the actions, but in the very heart and thoughts of mankind.

I. Adultery in the Heart

In verse 27 then, we read, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’” And so, here, once again, we find nothing wrong with the immediate statement, which is in keeping with the seventh commandment, but rather, in their attempting to fully expound the command, the religious leaders have greatly failed, by neglecting to address the weightier implications of this statement. In other words, once again, Jesus is not criticizing the teachers here, for what they had said, but rather, for what they had left out. To them, merely restricting one’s self from the actual act of committing adultery (of having sexual relations with

someone other than your own spouse) fulfilled the command. However, our Lord shows that the implications of this law, go much deeper than simply the mere act.

Notice, in verse 28, He responds, “But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” And so, what then is our Lord saying here? Namely that, in the sight of God, one can commit adultery in the heart, by allowing the imagination and the inner desires to entertain thoughts that would undress and intimately engage in sexual relations of any kind, with someone who is not your own spouse. In other words, the whole “you can look, but you can’t touch philosophy,” which society, in general, claims to be harmless and acceptable, is adultery in God’s sight. This would include such things as watching pornographic videos, going to strip bars, looking at pornographic magazines/web pages, entertaining soft porn or swimsuit ogling, or even kissing and/or undressing someone in the mind (which would certainly have applied in the first century, when our Lord spoke these words).

And if you think about it, for a moment, brethren, doesn’t the tenth commandment assume this to be the case, as well? Coveting is very much a command that gets to the inner desires and thoughts of the heart, and so, to desire someone else, who is not your own spouse is a form of coveting, isn’t it? Again, none of this is new law. Our Lord is rescuing the true intent of the law, from surface-level Scribes and Pharisees, who have softened it, so as to make the law something it was never meant to be...a means of justification. [Read Exodus 20:17; David/Bath]

And again, as we saw last time, our Lord then follows up his correct interpretation of the Law, with some very sobering words, to emphasize the critical importance of giving heed to it, especially since He did not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it. As we have seen, not a jot or a tittle of the Law would pass, until heaven and earth pass away [Read vs. 17-20 again]

“If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you...and if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you...” Now brethren, let me just preface what I am about to say here with these words. It is too easy to hear the words of the Lord expounded by a preacher, and to assume that the preacher is preaching a very unkind or harsh message, when the context demands such proclamation. I have always said that the context of Scripture informs the preacher about how to present whatever needs to be presented. In other words, God

has not even left the *demeanor* of preaching in the hands of men. And in this case, to preach these words in flowery, rainbow language, would be to completely mar what our Lord is stating here, and contradictory to the very way, in which, He Himself has stated it. There are a lot of comforting, soul easing texts in Scripture, but there are also fervent warnings and hellish proclamations given in the Scriptures...and this is one of the fervent warnings and hellish proclamations. And it would be unfair and deceptive for me to put on a “Joel Osteen,” “everything is honky dory for you,” smile on my face, while opening up this text. Forgive me for getting a little off track here, but brethren (and friends), I don’t want to rob you of the true value of this text, simply because it seems unpleasant and unsettling to the soul. It is what it is, and it needs to be stated as such. And stating it as such, is most profitable for us.

And so, that said, what is our Lord saying here? He is saying, “Look, stop making excuses for entertaining perverse thoughts. Stop making excuses for looking upon those who are not your spouse, in lustful ways. And, if you want to say that you can’t control what your eye sees; if your eye is the problem, then cut it out and throw it away from you! And if you want to say that your right hand (or your arms, or any other part of your physical body) opens up a proneness for you, in entertaining these kinds of lustful thoughts and actions, then cut it off, and cast it far away from you!” Now, if that seems a bit radical...it is! And that’s not because our Lord enjoys putting fear into people, for the sake of watching them shake in terror. It’s because our Lord understands, firsthand, how holy and pure our God and Creator is. It’s that serious, friends. And remember, this is written to Christians first!

And here is why our Lord tells us to take such radical measures when dealing with this sin of “lust in the heart.” “For it is more profitable for you (it is much better for you) that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.” And He repeats this sobering statement twice, for good measure! And so, how serious is the matter to God? It is better to take whatever pains are necessary, when dealing with our sins; it is better to take aggressive action in seeking to put our sins to death, than to walk casually with them, right into hell. Better to leave this world with lost body parts and war scars from the battle, than to enter hell in perfect health, with all parts.

Now again, brethren, this is not a matter of justification. One can be a virgin, in mind and action, all of their lives and still enter hell. Christ alone brings us to glory. However, this is about taking sin seriously and fighting to put it to death. Dealing with sin, even within the sphere of Gospel grace, is never to be taken lightly. God doesn't take it lightly, does He? I'm open for correction, if someone thinks that I am misinterpreting or misunderstanding something in this text. And so, the point then is this:

1) God is concerned about the heart. He is not merely concerned about the letter of the Law, but of the Spirit of it. And this has always been the case. Lusting after someone who is not your spouse has always been a great offense in God's sight. It is adultery in the heart.

2) We are called to take radical measures, when dealing with remaining sin. Now, are we to literally cut out our eyes, and to cut off our arms? Only if they are really causing us to continue on in sin. However, our Lord knows that that is a deceptive excuse of the flesh. Our natural physical components are not to blame. But, if we want to blame them, then it would be better to do away with them, than to continue on, excusing our sins because of them. But, the general admonition is this: Do whatever is necessary to diligently, consistently strive, to put sin to death.

Does this mean that those who have fallen into such sins are beyond repair and condemned? Of course not. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." That's what the cross is for. However, don't hold the blood of Christ in contempt, and don't treat God's grace in a flippant, presumptuous manner. Be at war with sin! Strive to kill it, before it kills you! [Ill: You're in the bedroom and the house is on fire...what types of measure do you take, and how fervent are you, in seeking to get out!]. We have a fountain of grace, given us in Christ, all the more to compel us not to sin. And when we do, thanks be unto God that we have an Advocate in our Savior, but don't dare settle comfortably in sin, ever.

II. Concluding Thoughts

1) Brethren, let us never see our sin as a small matter in the sight of God. When you are tempted to grow lax in the battle, remember what our sins did to Christ. Take a walk up Golgotha's hill and view the beaten, bloodied and crucified Savior, shouting aloud, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me!" The utter crushing and pummeling of the body and soul of our Savior, on the cross, is as a large banner that bears, in bright bold letters, these words, "This is how our holy God must deal with sin, if He is to remain just and righteous!" Never forget that scene, as you daily battle with temptation.

2) Brethren, as you wrestle with lustful thoughts and temptations, further remind yourself that you are the temple of God, and the Holy Spirit has actually taken up residence in you. Every profane reality that you entertain, is done to the great grief of the Holy Spirit, who indwells you. It is like Hophni and Phinehas (Eli's priestly sons), who committed shameful, sexual acts with women on the temple grounds. And so, let that serve as an additional restraint against entertaining sinful lusts.

3) If you are presently in the throes of battling with sexual lusts, utilize every means of grace to put it to death, and to nail a lid on its coffin. Violently take aim at it. Prayerfully meditate on Scriptures that directly address lust, and prayerfully meditate on the glory of Christ's sacrifice and atonement for you. Let both, the fear and love of God, drive lust's filthy grasp from your soul. Fast, if necessary. But, don't lay the sword down, and never surrender. Attack it with every ounce of your strength, and with full confidence in the grace and sovereignty of God, that He can bring about the deliverance that you desperately need. It is that important!

4) Friends, there are some of you here, who are gambling with the very destination of your eternal souls. You continue to refuse to come to Christ, that you might be reconciled to God and have eternal life. And were you to die right now, today, you would spend an eternity (an eternity!) in agonizing hell fire, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, without end. Please understand that hell is for real, because God is for real. Whatever you are doing to ease your conscience and to appease your guilt, understand this...you are standing on the very brink of eternity, and should you die today, there will be no turning back...ever. There is no forgiveness

or salvation beyond this life. You will find no redeemer, able to save you, once you cross the ever nearing bridge of death.

You need to be ready now. Behold again, the reality of just how serious your sins are, in the sight of God. Hell is not God's random choice for condemning sinners, it is God's righteous and just certainty. You may not understand this now. You may be hiding from reality now, but God must and will condemn you to hell, forever, if you die in your sins. This is not the fancy doctrine of man, it comes right from the mouth of Jesus Himself. Don't fool with God. Don't put His offer off another day, for you do not know when your time is up. Repent of your sins and flee to Christ by faith, right now, before it is too late, and you are forever doomed to an unending world of eternal regret. Christ came into the world to die for sinners. Call upon Him now; lay hold of the full benefits of His life, death and resurrection, now (not tomorrow), and be saved, before your sins drag you straight to hell, like an anchor that is incapable of ever being removed.

Amen!!!

Benediction: Jude 1:24-25