

THE SACREDNESS OF MARRIAGE

Matthew 5:27-32

Intro: Why the Lord singled out the particular aspects of the Law which He did, we can't say with any degree of authority. But it is important that we seek to understand what He had to say about each one. We saw in examining our Lord's words about the sixth commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," that He was showing that we can be guilty of violating that commandment even though we never actually murder anyone. I think that it can be said that most murders are premeditated, and that they have their roots in anger. I read that the boys who shot at the school bus down at the coast were angry with the driver because he had some part in getting a student expelled from school. We can all be very thankful that those boys were not successful in what they wanted to do, but you see they had murder in their hearts. Our Lord certainly did not mean that if you are angry, you might as well go ahead and kill the person against whom you are angry, but He did mean that we need to be very, very careful about harboring anger in our hearts toward anyone. The roots of murder are in an angry heart.

I don't know how prevalent murder was in those days, but it must have been fairly common for the Lord to use this example. You will remember that when the Lord was on trial before Pilate, the crowd chose a man who was a murderer to be released instead of our Lord.

Today murder has become something that we hear about almost daily, and sometimes more than one in a community. And let me say that a great part of the reason is due to the influence of the teaching of evolution in our schools. I think I mentioned to you last Sunday morning one thing that God said to Noah and his sons after the flood. Let me repeat it for you today. It is found in Gen. 9:6, and I want you to note in particular the last part of the verse:

Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.

That is not what our children are being taught these days – not only that "God made ... man," but that man was made "in the image of God." This was to be a deterrent against murder. When the Members of the Godhead created man, this is what they said: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen. 1:26). And then this is what They did: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:27). *This set Adam and Eve apart from all of the other creatures. And this is the answer to evolution. Man*

did not evolve from some lower form of life; he was created in the image of God – and this applies to all people. Only Adam and Eve were created, but all of us came into this world “in the image of God.” So for anyone to commit murder is a sin against the triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. People may get by with it in our country, but nobody will get by with murder in the court of heaven.

The same truth applies to our text today. Our Lord spoke about *adultery*, and He spoke about *marriage*, and He spoke about *divorce*. These are all subjects that are very much in the news in our country today.

But now in dealing with subjects like this, we need to ask, “Where did marriage get started?” And the answer again is that it began with God. He made a man and a woman, and He was the One Who brought the woman, Eve, to the man, Adam. So it is perfectly right to say that *it was God Who performed the first marriage*. And God gave them the ability to have children, and so He told them to “be fruitful, and multiply” (Gen. 1:28). God did not create two men, and then tell them to be fruitful and multiply because that is not the way He planned for children to be conceived. Neither did He create two women, and tell them to be fruitful and multiply. And so according to God’s plan two men cannot make a family, neither can two women. Those are wicked perversions of God’s plan. He did not even give Adam two wives. He gave Adam only one wife. And so the account of creation in Genesis answers a lot of questions that people need to be asking today. And whenever men and/or nations have sought to change what God ordained, there is a big price to pay.

Anybody who reads the Bible is familiar with what I have been pointing out. But the problem today is that hardly anybody is reading the Bible. And yet if you read the Bible like you would read any other book, starting at the first, these are the very first things that you learn.

God’s plan for marriage has never changed. Men have tried to change it. Many men have had more than one wife, and often they have had more than one at the same time. But such relationships have always been displeasing to God – and they still are today! God is very patient, but we are seeing signs that His patience is running out as far as our country is concerned, and if people want to avoid the judgment of God, they had better get a Bible, start reading it, and bring their lives into line with what God has told us in His Word.

Now this brings us to our text for today.

I. “THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY” (Matt. 5:27).

God created us. He is sovereign over us. He has every right to determine for us what is right and what is wrong, and among those things which He said are wrong, is murder. And another is adultery. And whoever violates God's laws, falls under God's judgment. Oh, people may get away with it for a time, but there comes a time when the judgment of God falls.

Now remember also that things can be legal, and still be wrong in God's sight. And the name for anything that is wrong in God's sight is *sin*. And any nation which legalizes, or permits, activity which is condemned by God, is going to pay a price for what is going on.

But what is adultery?

Adultery is when a boy and a girl, or a man and a woman, enter into an intimate relationship which God has indicated in His Word is only right after a man and a woman have been *married*. *Even if a man and a woman agree to have such a relationship, it is wrong in God's sight. Under no circumstances is it right for unmarried people to have the relationship which God has ordained only for husbands and wives.*

It is also adultery when a man who is married enters into a relationship with any woman who is not his wife, whether she is married or unmarried. And it is wrong for a woman who is married to have this relationship with any other man besides her husband. Young people today have been led to think that they can do whatever they want to do, but to commit adultery is abominable in God's sight, and it will always bring judgment when people continue on in it – if not now, it will come later. God will determine when.

This is one reason that the Bible tells us that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7), and also that it is “the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10). People are engaging today in all kinds of sinful activity because they don't fear the Lord. And let me say that it doesn't make a bit of difference whether or not you believe in God, or whether or not you believe in sin, there is a God and He has determined what is right and what is wrong. That is not for you and me to decide. God is the God of this universe, and He is the Judge. And so you and I had better be well acquainted with His Word so we will know what He says is right, and what He says is wrong. It is the turning point in anyone's life when we learn the truth about God.

But let us go on to the next verse in our text. Here in verse 28 that Lord was not say that the only way you can commit adultery is by such a physical relationship with someone you are not married to, but He gave

some added truth.

II. THE LORD'S EXPLANATION OF THE COMMAND AGAINST ADULTERY (Matt. 28-30).

God not only demands purity of life, but there can be no real purity of life without purity of heart. So it is possible not to have committed the act of adultery, and yet to have committed adultery in one's heart. This often means that if the opportunity comes to commit adultery, and a person has been harboring such thoughts in his or her heart, the act may follow.

Many have pointed out the connection between this commandment against adultery (which is #7 in the ten commandments), and the tenth commandment which says, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife ... his manservant ... his maidservant ... his ox ... his donkey, nor anything that is thy neighbor's (Ex. 20:17).

The critical words in these verses are "lust" and "covet." It is possible for a man to think that a lady is attractive, or a woman to think a man is handsome, without lusting after that person. But we all need to be careful because it is easy for the Devil to take advantage of any situation, and our hearts are all inclined toward sin. So we all need to heed the warning. But to lust after a person of the opposite sex is *sin!* *God wants us to be "pure in heart."* *And you remember the promise in that Beatitude: "For they shall see God!"*

Then it is that the Lord spoke about the "right eye" and the "right hand."

Of the two eyes, the right was considered the more precious. And of the two hands, the right was considered the most valuable. Now to show that the Lord was not talking about tearing your right eye out, or actually cutting your right hand off, we all know that a person who has no right eye can still see out of his left eye, and a person who doesn't have a right hand, still has his left hand.

So what did the Lord mean?

Well, He was indicating that our eyes often see things which cause us to be tempted, and our hands are often the instruments which lead to sin. So the Lord was saying that it would be better for us to lose an eye or a hand rather than to lose our "whole body" in "hell." This is similar to another statement which our Lord made about salvation:

36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole

world, and lose his own soul?

37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mark 8:36-37).

It is often the sinful pleasures of this world that keep people from thinking about their souls. The love of money is the root of all evil, and many are so busy making money that they have no time to think about God, or their souls, or eternity – until it is too late! The pleasures of this life often, according to our Lord’s parable, choke out the Word, and a person is lost forever. Teen age involvement in adultery is leading millions of our young people straight down the path that leads to eternal doom.

So even if you haven’t actually committed adultery, be careful about what is going on in your heart. Be careful about what you look at in books, in magazine, on TV. And be careful about how you use your hands. Present the members of your body, which belongs to the Lord if you are really saved, and use your eyes and hands in a way that will please the Lord.

You see, the Bible teaches us things that we are not going to learn any-
place else! Don’t follow the crowd, or you will ruin your life, and spend eternity in hell.

Our text closes with:

III. OUR LORD’S WORD ABOUT DIVORCE (Matt. 5:31-32).

Notice that we have the same pattern of speaking here that we had in verses 21 and 22, and then in verses 27 and 28 – with a slight variation. (Read.)

This word from our Lord does not actually have to do with one of the ten commandments, and yet in another sense it is related to the commandment we have just been considering – on adultery.

Marriage is a very, very sacred relationship. As some of our marriage ceremonies say, “It is not to be entered into lightly, but carefully, and prayerfully, and in the fear of God.” No decision we make is more important except regarding our salvation. The writer of Hebrews tells us that “marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremonger and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4). And Solomon, speaking by the Holy Spirit, said in Prov. 18:22,

Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the LORD.

But there were divorces in the OT. This is what the Lord was referring to in verse 31. And He was referring to Deut. 24:1-4 which says,

- 1 When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.
- 2 And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.
- 3 And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife;
- 4 Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

The conditions for a divorce were not very specific. However, we have this comment from our Lord during His ministry here on earth. You will find this in Mark 10:1-9:

- 1 And he arose from thence, and cometh into the coasts of Judaea by the farther side of Jordan: and the people resort unto him again; and, as he was wont, he taught them again.
- 2 And the Pharisees came to him, and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife? tempting him.
- 3 And he answered and said unto them, What did Moses command you?
- 4 And they said, Moses suffered to write a bill of divorcement, and to put her away.
- 5 And Jesus answered and said unto them, For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept.
- 6 But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female.
- 7 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife;
- 8 And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh.
- 9 What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

Now under the Law, God gave the men the opportunity to give their wives a bill of divorcement, but this was because of the hardness of their hearts. And it was God's original plan that those who were married should never be separated, except by death. But here He mentioned that adultery was

the one reason a man and his wife could be divorced – but it does not mean that they had to be divorced if one or the other were unfaithful. But adultery is so terrible in God’s sight that it is a basis for divorce –BUT, AS I HAVE SAID, IT DOES NOT HAVE TO BE! May the Lord keep us all from such a tragic event! However, if this has happened, or should happen, how wonderful it is to see a couple confess their sin to the Lord (because there are usually two sides to such a problem), be reconciled, and go on together with the Lord determined that by the grace of God such a thing shall not ever happen again.

Concl: This is a difficult subject to speak about, and I wondered if it would be proper on the Sunday that we are observing the Lord’s Supper. But as I reflected upon this, I remembered that the Apostle Paul indicated in his instructions to the church at Corinth, and then on to us, that our time at the Lord’s Table should include a time of self-examination. The Lord knows our hearts, and He knows, and we know, whether or not things are right in our lives. And perhaps this is a good time this morning for those of us who are married, to commit ourselves again to the Lord, praying that if there is any trouble between us and our spouses, that the Lord will forgive us and cleanse us and strengthen us that the Devil may not be able in any way to take advantage of us. And then let us eat the bread and drink from the cup to the glory of God, thanking the Lord that the same blood that saved us whenever it was that we were saved, is the same blood that cleanses us day by day from any defilement we have with any sin whatever it may be.