

THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE

Matthew 5:27-32

Intro: As much as I hate to say it, we are living in a very, very corrupt society. And it is corrupt because it is God-less. God has been replaced by man. The denial of God's existence is everywhere, and evolution has replaced the Creator. As a result we are reaping a whirlwind of major problems of all kinds, and these problems are out of control. But those of us who are out of step with our times, those of us who know that there is a God, that He is our Creator, and that we are responsible to Him for our behavior, recognize that so-called human rights have replace any idea in most people's minds, of the will of God. The hue and cry of the homosexuals today, is that to forbid them marriage, is a violation of their rights. Those who support abortion sing another verse to the same song. No one, they say, has the right to subject a woman and her body to some law which forbids it. *But nobody seems to be talking about God in these days. Even those who oppose the homosexuals and the abortionists seem hesitant to speak about God. But God is the One Whom we need to be talking about because God is the One Who determines what is right and what is wrong! Therefore, all of us had better make sure that we are making our lifestyle decisions on the basis of the will of God. And He hasn't left us in the dark as to His will in the major issues of life and death because He has given it to us in His Word.*

The people who tell us that they don't believe there is a God, are not telling us the truth. The Apostle Paul under the direction of the Holy Spirit, has told us in Romans chapter one that God has placed in every human heart the consciousness of God's existence, and he has also said that in nature all around us, we have undeniable evidence of God, the Creator. Let me read to you what Paul wrote. Here it is:

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.

20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse (Rom. 1:18-20).

The problem is not that God has not made Himself known. The problem is that man's mind is so closed to the truth that he cannot understand what

is very obviously true.

But there are serious consequences to setting God aside and refusing to believe that He is God. And let me point out that Paul informed us of what those consequences would be. It is all in Romans chapter one. If you haven't done so, please turn in your Bibles to Romans one, and follow as I read. I will begin with verse 21. (Read Rom. 1:21-32.)

So, do you see where all of our sins and troubles have come from? They are the result of rejecting God and refusing to have anything to do with Him and His will in our lives. There are very, very serious consequences to the rejection of the one, true, living God, the Creator and Sustainer of this universe in which we live. Homosexuality not only leads to the judgment of God, but it is the judgment of God.

Three times in this passage God has told us that when we refuse to have anything to do with God, He gives us over to what we want to do, and the story that follows is just exactly a description of our society today. And that God-less organization, the ACLU, is doing all that they can to make a bad situation worse, much worse. We don't need people to lead us farther away from God and His Word, but we need people who will lead us back to God and to His Word. We don't need people who encourage us to stand up for our rights (because we really don't have any); we need people who will show us what fools we have made of ourselves because we have insisted in having our own way, and that will help us to see, by the grace of Almighty God, that the true path to happiness and peace is in doing the will of God, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now after mentioning several sins, Paul gave us a list of sins, the results of rejecting God, beginning with verse 29. I won't read it again, but I want to call your attention to the first sin: "fornication." Now make a note of that on a piece of paper, or at least in your mind.

Now turn with me to 1 Corinthians 6 where we have another list of sins which the Apostle Paul, writing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, has given to us. I will begin reading with verse 9. Notice the first three sins: "fornicators . . . idolaters . . . adulterers . . ." There are men and women in all three categories. Those who have given their lives to reading and studying and teaching the Bible, do not always agree on the distinction between "fornicators" and "adulterers." Both are people who have had intimate relations with members of the opposite sex *to whom they are not*

married! But it is probably true, and our English dictionaries support the idea that fornication has to do with unmarried couples while adultery has to do with a couple where at least one is married to someone else, or both are married to other people. So the two words include all forms of illicit relationships between men and women. Paul in Romans 1 had already condemned the relationship of two men with each other, or two women with each other.

Now let us go to Galatians 5 where we have another list of sins. Follow in your Bible as I begin with verse 19. What do we have here? This list begins with the same sins which we read about in the other lists: “Adultery” and “fornication” – a condemnation of all such sins including those who are married to someone else, or those who are not married at all.

Now let us go to our text for the morning.

Why did God give this seventh of the ten commandments, “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” And why did the Lord include it here in His Sermon on the Mount? What was the purpose of this commandment? It was to preserve the sanctity of the marriage relationship. It was telling people not to enter into such a relationship with anyone before you get married, and afterwards don’t engage in it with anyone but your own husband or wife. God made us male and female. It just didn’t happen that way. And we were made in the image of God Himself, which forever sets us apart from all other living creatures. And this relationship is not for the gratification of our sinful lusts, but for the fulfillment of God’s purpose in marriage. And you can see from the place that Paul gave to these sins in the lists that he has given to us, that, when this basic relationship is perverted in any way, through homosexual activity, or adultery, fornication, all of life is perverted. It breeds all other kinds of sins.

If you don’t believe the Word of God for any other reason, you ought to believe it because of the way it describes man. The Biblical doctrine of sin is illustrated before us, and often in our own hearts, every day that we live. A person is a fool who can look at our society today and not come to the conclusion that there is something terribly wrong everywhere. And the Bible points at man, sinful man, God-rejecting man. And it is only as we turn to God, seeking the forgiveness of our sins through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that we can be delivered from the bondage we are under which men call their “rights,” or their “civil liberties.” It is alarming to realize that even children are getting involved in this sin, and with

millions of our young people, this is the way they expect a date to end.

God's Word to all of us is, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." In both the Greek and the Hebrew it is stated in just two words. Neither in the OT nor in the NT is it stated in the plural, but in the singular, meaning it is addressed to each one of us individually. We are all responsible to God to make sure that we obey God. But let me be quick to point out what Paul added in 1 Corinthians 6 after he had listed the sins. He said this in verse 11:

11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

If your life is characterized by the sins that Paul has mentioned in these three passages, it means that you are not saved. But you don't have to remain in that condition. That is why Jesus Christ came into this world – to save us from our sins. And it is only through His substitutionary and sacrificial death that we can be forgiven, cleansed from our sins, and made acceptable to God. All of us are sinners. All of us are guilty, not always of the same sins, but guilty nevertheless. But the main difference between us is, if there is a difference, that some of us are forgiven sinners, while others are still in their sins, and under divine judgment. Oh, if you have not believed in Christ, ask Him to save you before you leave this place today.

But now let me call your attention to our text.

First we have:

I. OUR LORD'S EXPLANATION OF THE COMMANDMENT (Matt. 5:27-28).

People have always set this commandment aside if they have not actually committed adultery or fornication. But the Lord went on to show that adultery does not begin with the act; it begins in the heart. And in God's sight the lustful look is adultery. He did not mean that if you have the lustful thought you might as well go ahead with the act, but He wanted them to know that the sin begins in the heart.

On another occasion our Lord was explaining to His disciples that it was not which goes into our mouths which defiles us, but that which comes out of our hearts. And He expressed it this way:

21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders,

22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness:

23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man (Mark 7:21-23).

This is why Solomon wrote in Prov. 4:23, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

This is one reason why pornography is so dangerous. It feeds sinful hearts and is sin, and leads to more sin.

But now let us look at the way in which the Lord expressed

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS COMMAND (Matt. 5:29-30).

These two verses are quite shocking when you first read them, aren't they? And perhaps you may wonder what they have to do with the subject of adultery. But if you give it some thought, I think that you will recognize that our eyes and our hands are but two of the members of our bodies which can get us into trouble.

But the real question which is presented to us is, What is there that you desire so much that you would be willing to give an eye or a hand to obtain it? Both are very important parts of our bodies, and most of us would feel that we don't want to give up either an eye or a hand for anything. No pleasure we seek, no possession we would like to have, would be worth such a sacrifice. Perhaps to spare the life of somebody we love very much, would cause us to give up an eye or a hand, but even that would be difficult.

But if you were asked if you hate sin so much that if you could be delivered from it, would you give up an eye or a hand to have such a deliverance guaranteed to you? This was what the Lord had in mind. And actually our eyes and our hands can get us into difficulty if we are tempted to commit adultery. The Lord had already spoken about the heart, and now He brings up the question of the eye and the hand.

The temptation to sin often comes to us by what we see. It happened that way with Eve. The Bible says that “when she saw the fruit” and the attractive things about it, she took it and ate it. When Achan saw that

Babylonish garment and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold that weighed fifty shekels, he coveted them, and took them. It was when David from his roof top saw Bathsheba bathing that he sent for her and committed adultery with her. And in the process his hands were involved. It is very likely that David thought many times of how his eyes and hands were used to bring him down in disgrace, and how he wished that he had never sinned as he did.

I just heard on the news last night that pornography has reached overwhelming acceptance in our day, and it is no wonder that we have so many sex crimes, and that adultery is running rampant in our country.

There is no record that anyone in the Bible ever took an eye out, or cut a hand off, and I don't think that the Lord actually had that in mind. But He did want His disciples to think, and He wants us to do the same, about how much we really want to stop sinning. People often sin, and then continue in sin *because they like it, and enjoy their sin. But the Lord was indicating here that we are probably not going to be delivered from the sins which so easily overcome us until we hate it so much that if taking an eye out or cutting a hand off would give us deliverance, we would do it.*

Remember the words of the hymn that say, "take away the love of sinning"? Our Lord loved righteousness and hated iniquity (see Heb. 1:9), and He wants us to do the same. Be careful about what you let your eyes dwell on. We can't help it often when something suggestive or obscene comes in our vision, but we can keep from continuing to look at it. We used to teach children the song which had the words, "Be careful little eyes what you see." That is a good song for all of us as long as we live. Be careful about pictures you look at. Be careful about the books you read. Hide God's Word in your heart so that you will not sin against Him. God designed marriage for our happiness, but the greatest tragedies have resulted when people have forgotten (if they ever knew) God's plan for marriage, and have launched out on their own plan.

So with this commandment the Lord was seeking to preserve the sanctity, the holiness, the godliness, and the happiness of marriage.

This section ends with the Lord's teaching on

III. DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE (Matt. 5:31-32).

The teaching of the Scriptures is that marriage is forever. That was the plan of God from the day that Adam and Eve were created and the Lord brought them together. But there was one reason for divorce which the Lord gave here. That was fornication. It doesn't have to mean the breakup of the marriage but usually in the case of repeated violations of the marriage bond there may be no other solution. Actually adultery breaks the marriage bond. And it seems to me that the Lord was saying that the husband or wife who has been sinned against, has the right to remarriage. If the divorce is on any other grounds than unfaithfulness, neither has the right to remarry.

Concl: Marriage has been ordained by God. He actually performed the first marriage when he brought Eve to Adam, and she became his wife. But there is hardly anything more tragic than when a marriage is broken by adultery. That is the reason that the Lord spoke so forcefully, and so comprehensively, tracing adultery and every other sin to the heart. Couples need to go together long enough to be as certain as possible that their union is going to be in the Lord. Even then there can be mistakes. But how wonderful it is when two people, a man and a woman, who know the Lord, commit themselves to each other, to live together in fellowship with the Lord, and whose primary purpose in life is to please the Lord by living in obedience to the Word.