

We continue in our sermon series 'Righteous Living' where for seven weeks – Practical

Anger – Lust – Divorce – Oaths – Retaliation – Loving Enemies – Giving to the Needy

Lust is a sinful, inward desire that seeks to possess someone—in a way God has forbidden

- Lust is sinful – It misses the mark on how God has intended us to live
- Inward desire – Lust comes from the heart...it can manifest physically...heart condition
- Possess someone – In the context of this passage the 'possessing someone is sexually'
- God has forbidden – All sexual relationships are to be manifested confines of marriage

Last week a friend made joke, 'Can I lust after my wife' – No...you cannot by definition

Being attracted to your wife brings honor and glory to God...your sexual relationship brings

But today we are going to talk about purity...sexual purity and purity of your heart...

As a previous youth pastor...this is my jam...wanna hear about when I screwed up big time
Year was 2008 and I was a leader for a High School Ministry – Conference 'Not even a hint'
I preached a message so intense the boys and girls were afraid to hug, handshake, high-five

- I had failed to communicate the truth behind purity effectively...I missed the heart
- and just made a group of students afraid of touching one another...it was pretty funny

Sexual purity is the commitment to honor God with your body, mind, and desires by
keeping sexual thoughts and actions within God's design for sexuality

- ⇒ **Purity of the heart** — refusing to cultivate lustful thoughts and desires
- ⇒ **Purity of the body** — Using our bodies ways honor God rather than sexual immorality
- ⇒ **Purity of relationships** — reserving sexual intimacy for the covenant of marriage
- ⇒ **Purity of conduct** — avoiding sexual immorality in both actions and attitudes.

All your sexual activity must be kept between you and your spouse

Jesus actually doubles down in our text making it easier to fall into the sin of adultery

- 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 lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Imagine a man walking through a store and noticing something he wants. Doesn't steal it.

- Doesn't put in pocket...He simply looks at it and begins thinking, "I wish I had that."
- Nothing has happened outwardly—but something has already happened inwardly.

That's the way temptation works

The battle begins in the heart before it ever becomes visible in our behavior

And that's exactly where Jesus takes us in Matthew 5

- The religious leaders were concerned about avoiding the outward act of adultery
- Jesus goes deeper. He says that God's standard of purity isn't simply about what our bodies do; it's also about what our insides desire.
- Jesus is not merely asking, "Have you committed adultery?"
- He is asking, "What is happening inside your heart?"

Because God doesn't just want clean hands—He wants clean hearts

In Matthew 5:27–30, Jesus confronts the desires that can lead us into sexual sin

Big Idea - pursue purity in the desires of your hearts

We live in a world that teaches us to manage our appearance...Jesus desire is for heart

- Most of us understand that there are certain things we should never do
- But what if sin begins long before the action? Lust is that sin | **Three don't**

1. Don't fight temptation with good intentions alone (27-28)

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 lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Most people understand that temptation is dangerous...**temptation isn't sin!**

Problem is we often respond to temptation good intentions rather than intentional action

- We tell ourselves: "I would never actually commit adultery." "I won't go too far"
- "I can handle it" "I'll just look for a second." "I know where the line is, won't cross it."

But temptation rarely begins with the action - Begins w/ what we desire...shouldn't have

- Man doesn't wake up morning and decide, "Today I'm going to destroy my marriage."
- Woman doesn't suddenly decide, "Today I'm going violate God's design for sexuality."

Sin develops through a series of seemingly small choices

- what we look at, what we entertain, what we imagine, what we allow ourselves desire

a. **Refuse to Reason With Temptation** - "everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent..."

Jesus is addressing intentional looking – Difference between seeing and SEEING

The point is intention...I can recognize that all the women in here are beautiful...no intent

You cannot always control the first glance - You can control the second look

Knock at the door...you don't invite them in - Aren't responsible for fact that they knocked

You are responsible for whether you open the door and invite them inside

You may encounter temptation unexpectedly, but you don't have to invite it to stay

b. **Recognize That Temptation Begins in the Heart** - already committed adultery w/ her...heart

- The Pharisaical approach could reduce this command to an outward action:

"I haven't committed adultery, therefore I'm righteous." – Gods concern goes deeper

Physical act of adultery is wrong, but the sinful desire that produces the act is also wrong

An iceberg is deceptive because you only see a small portion above the water

The behavior is what people see. The heart is where the sin begins

Someone may never commit adultery while continually entertaining adulterous thoughts

Purity isn't merely about controlling your body; it's about surrendering your will

Before sin becomes an action, it often becomes an imagination, a desire, a fantasy

c. **Replace Temptation With a Greater Desire** | Not 'Don't look' – Look to Christ

- We don't overcome sinful desires merely by trying harder not to desire them

Psalms 119:37 "Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things; give me life in your ways."

- Notice both sides: **Turn my eyes away - Give me life in Your ways**
 - Biblical purity requires both **removal and replacement**
 - Remove what feeds sinful desire. Replace it with what feeds your love for Christ.

Want to put out a fire, you don't simply yell at the flames: "Stop burning!" – Remove Fuel

- Likewise, if we continually feed our minds with sexually provocative images, fantasies, entertainment, and conversations, we shouldn't be surprised when those desires grow
- But when we fill our minds with God's Word, pursue prayer, cultivate healthy relationships, and focus our attention on Christ, we're feeding a different desire

Ask yourself three questions:

1. What temptation am I underestimating?
2. What am I allowing to feed that temptation?
3. What practical step do I need to take to remove its influence?

2. Don't entertain what you should eliminate. (29)

²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.

For next two verses...Jesus is using radical language...not to take an ice cream scoop head

- Jesus is not teaching us to physically mutilate ourselves.
- Deliberately shocking language teach a spiritual truth: **Sin must be dealt with radically**
- a. **Realize the seriousness of sin** - If your right eye causes you to sin tear it out
- **The eye represents an avenue through which sin enters our lives**
- The point isn't that the eye itself is evil...it's what we do with our eyes...used to view sin

When our eyes are used to view sin...we must tear out what we're viewing
 Poisonous snake in your house...do you just leave it there? Do you get rid of it!?!?
 You would cut its head off and get it as far away from the house as possible
 Some of you are playing with rattle snakes hoping not to get bit
 Drag your sexual sin out into the daylight and put a bullet between its eyes

- b. **Remove the sources that feed temptation** - "tear it out and throw it away."
 Jesus is teaching us that there are things we need to remove, not merely resist
- If your phone repeatedly becomes a doorway to lust: **Change how you use your phone.**
- If certain social media accounts consistently provoke sinful thoughts: **Unfollow them.**
- If a particular website repeatedly leads you into sin: **Block them**
- If a relationship continually pulls you away from Christ: **Establish boundaries.**
- If certain entertainment continually feeds impurity: **Stop consuming it.**
- If being alone in certain circumstances produces temptation: **Change circumstances.**

This is not legalism - This is wisdom – This is you taking the drastic steps Jesus talking

You don't prove your spiritual maturity by seeing how close you can get to sin without committing it

- c. **Remember what is at stake** - For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. - Jesus brings eternity into the conversation
- It is not this obedience will keep you from hell...it is that people not destined for hell act in obedience
- He is saying that obedience is worth whatever sacrifice it requires.
- There may be things you have to give up - habits you have to break
- Boundaries you have to establish - Relationships you have to change
- Pleasures you have to surrender. - **But compared with eternity, the sacrifice is worth it**
- "Your leg has become infected, don't remove it, infection will spread and threaten your life."

Losing a leg would be devastating – Lose leg or lose life...you lose the leg

Lose something valuable rather than allow sin to destroy something far more valuable

1. **Identify it:** What consistently feeds sin in your life?
2. **Eliminate it:** What specific boundary or change do you need to make?
3. **Replace it:** What godly practice will you pursue instead?
3. **Don't settle for outward purity; pursue inward holiness (30)**

³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Jesus calls us beyond managing our outward behavior to surrendering our inward desires to God.

- **Matthew 5:29:** Deal radically with the avenues of temptation
- **Matthew 5:30:** Deal radically with the actions and patterns that temptation produces
- Verse 29 emphasizes what we allow to influence us
- Verse 30 emphasizes what we do with our hands, habits, and choices
- a. **Pursue holiness, not merely behavior modification** And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away - Christian holiness is more than behavior modification
- You can change behavior without changing desire.
- A person can stop committing adultery and still nurture lust.
- A person can stop looking at pornography and still fantasize about sexual immorality.

Outward restraint is valuable, but Jesus wants something deeper – **Inward Transformation**

Imagine an apple tree producing rotten apples

You could walk around the tree every morning and remove every rotten apple.

Eventually you might have a tree that looks better. If the root is diseased, problem remains
 Answer isn't to keep removing rotten fruit You have to address the condition of the tree.

Jesus is going after the root, not merely the fruit

- b. **Make sacrifices that protect your holiness**

For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Jesus brings the issue back to eternal priorities - He teaching that holiness is worth sacrifice

- Sometimes pursuing holiness means saying no to something you really want
 - Sometimes it means changing a habit - Sometimes it means setting a boundary
 - Sometimes it means confessing sin - Sometimes it means getting accountability
- Holiness is saying: My desire for Christ is more important than my desire for temporary pleasure

- c. **Let Christ transform the heart**

We pursue holiness because we have received God's grace and now belong to Him

Rom - "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind

- Christianity isn't simply about learning to behave better.
- It is about becoming different people through the transforming work of God.
- The goal isn't merely: "I don't do that anymore."
- The goal is:

"Christ is changing what I love, what I desire, what I think about, and how I live."

Big Idea - pursue purity in the desires of your hearts