

Jesus on Lust

Text: Matthew 5:27-30

Introduction: The Bible has a lot to say about freedom.

The Apostle Paul writes in Galatians 5:1, “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” He writes in Romans 8:2, “For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.” And Peter exhorts his readers in 1 Peter 2:16, “Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.”

Freedom in the Bible is a beautiful thing. But the world around us often means something very different from the Bible when it uses the word “freedom.” The world often means that we are free to do whatever we want. Live and let live. The Bible means that we are free from our flesh to walk in obedience to God and His Word.

This discussion of the differences between the world’s understanding of freedom and the Bible’s teaching concerning freedom is particularly relevant to our sermon this morning. We are making our way through the Sermon on the Mount. Last week Jesus confronted us with the sixth commandment: “You shall not murder.” We learned that God isn’t only concerned with what we do outwardly. In fact, He is most interested in our hearts.

And this morning Jesus does the same thing with the seventh commandment: “You shall not commit adultery.”

Sexual freedom is one of the idols of our culture. Do whatever makes you happy. Don’t let anyone tell you what to do. As long as everyone consents, it’s okay. There’s no objective moral standard. That’s the world’s view.

But Jesus makes clear that not only does God have something to say about what we do with our bodies. He also has something to say about the condition of our hearts. Jesus doesn’t just say, “Do not commit adultery”; He says, “Do not even look at a woman with lustful intent.”

We find this teaching from Jesus in Matthew 5. Go ahead and turn there in your Bible. We’re going to be looking at Matthew 5:27-30. If you’re using the black pew Bible, you can find it on page 760. If you don’t own a Bible, we invite you to take the pew Bible with you when you leave.

(Read Matthew 5:27-30...Pray)

The seventh commandment says, “You shall not commit adultery.”

We’re going to see this morning that **followers of Jesus obey the seventh commandment by embracing God’s good design for sex and fleeing sexual immorality.**

Let’s look at the first part of that statement first...

I. Followers of Jesus embrace God’s design (Matthew 5:27).

Jesus says... (Read vs. 27)

A. Jesus quotes the seventh commandment, “You shall not commit adultery.”

- 1. We know that adultery, strictly speaking, is sexual activity between a married person and someone other than that person's spouse.**
- 2. All of those listening to Jesus, both His disciples and the crowd, were familiar with the seventh commandment. They had heard it all their lives. “You shall not commit adultery.”**
- 3. Interestingly, Jesus doesn’t give the penalty for adultery here as He does with murder in verse 21.**
- 4. But we know, and those listening to Jesus knew, that the penalty for adultery according to the Old Testament Law was the same as the penalty for murder. Leviticus 20:10 says, “If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.” We see the same thing in Deuteronomy 22:22, “If a man is found lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman. So you shall purge the evil from Israel.”**

5. We know this to be the teaching of the Old Testament Scriptures. Adultery is morally wrong.
6. And apparently, this was the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees concerning adultery. That's what Jesus means when He says, "You have heard that it was said..." Where had they heard it said? From the teachers of the Old Testament Law. The scribes and the Pharisees. They said, "You shall not commit adultery."
7. That's the letter of the Law. And the scribes and Pharisees taught that part of the Law strictly. The problem was that they emphasized the letter of the Law to the neglect of the principle behind the law.

B. See, the principle behind the Law is that God designed sex to be enjoyed in the context of marriage between one man and one woman.

1. That's why God says in the Ten Commandments, "You shall not commit adultery." God expects us to honor His design for sex. You can't honor God's design for sex and turn around and commit adultery.
2. We know that God is our Creator. As we were reminded last week, God created us in His image.
 - a. And perhaps it was more obvious why we talked about our being created in the image of God in relation to the sixth commandment. But understand that our being created in the image of God is foundational for how we think about every aspect of our lives as human beings.
 - b. Maybe you wonder why God cares so much about sex. The answer is that God cares about sex because He cares about us. What we do with our bodies matters to God because we matter to God.
 - c. God created sex as a blessing to His image bearers. But when we step outside of God's design, sex can quickly become a curse instead of a blessing.
3. The Bible teaches us that God made us male and female.

- a. We looked at Genesis 1:27 last week where the Bible says, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."
- b. This is God's design. He made us male and female.
- c. When God saw that Adam was alone, He made Eve and brought her to Adam. And Adam said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man" (Gen. 2:23).

4. And the Bible teaches us that God designed sex for our good.

- a. We know that God designed sex for the good of PROCREATION.
 - 1) *After creating male and female in His image, God says, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28).*
 - 2) *At the beginning of Genesis 4 we read, "Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain" (Gen. 4:1).*
 - 3) *We live in a culture that works very hard to separate sex from reproduction. But God says that the two are inextricably linked. He designed it that way.*
- b. We also know from the Bible that God designed sex for the good of ONENESS between husband and wife.
 - 1) *Genesis 2 says, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed" (Gen. 2:24-25).*
 - 2) *The Bible is clear that sex is part of the process of the two becoming one. It is intended by God to have a profoundly unifying effect in uniting husband and wife. This is what gives it such*

power. The Apostle Paul talks about this in 1 Corinthians 6 where he urges the Corinthians to flee from sexual immorality.

c. The Bible also teaches that God designed sex for the good of PLEASURE.

- 1) The culture around us views this as the only purpose of sex. But as we've seen, that is not the case.*
- 2) But just because it isn't the ONLY purpose of sex doesn't mean it isn't a purpose.*
- 3) God designed sex to be enjoyed in the context of marriage between one man and one woman. We see this very clearly in passages of Scripture like Proverbs 5:18-19 and Song of Solomon.*

- 5. The point is that God is our Creator, which means that He is the Creator of sex. God designed sex to be enjoyed in the context of marriage between one man and one woman.**
- 6. I've shared the illustration before of a fireplace. We don't have a real fireplace in our home, but we do have gas logs. We don't use them a lot in the winter, but sometimes on a really cold winter morning, I'll turn them on and enjoy the warmth they provide while sipping my morning coffee. They really come in handy if the electricity goes out. But think about sex like a fire. If you light a fire in a fireplace, it gives light, warmth, and life. But if you light it anywhere else in the house, it will be dangerous, destructive, and even life-threatening. In the right place it can perfectly enhance a home. In the wrong place it can burn the whole thing to the ground. See Goshen, sex is like that. You might say that it is a form of holy fire. In the context of marriage, it expresses and deepens the love of a husband and wife. But in all other contexts, it causes enormous pain and destruction. This is why the Bible insists on sex only being for a particular setting. Within marriage, sex is a gift from God. Outside the right context, sex is harmful (Allberry, 39).**

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’”

Jesus is not relaxing the seventh commandment one bit. He did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it.

Followers of Jesus embrace God's design. #2...

II. Followers of Jesus flee sexual immorality (Matthew 5:28).

Jesus says... (Read vs. 28)

A. Notice how verse 28 begins: “BUT I say to you...”

- 1. Just like we saw last week with His teaching concerning murder, Jesus contrasts His own authority with that of the scribes and Pharisees.**
- 2. The scribes and Pharisees had the authority to teach God's Law, but they did not have the kind of authority Jesus had as God in flesh.**
- 3. In fact, the result of the Sermon on the Mount was that the crowds were astonished at Jesus' teaching. They recognized Jesus as teaching with an authority that the scribes did not possess.**
- 4. Here Jesus claims the authority to interpret the seventh commandment.**

B. And what is that interpretation? That “everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

- 1. With all authority in heaven and on earth, God the Son says that looking at a woman with lustful intent is as much a violation of the seventh commandment as adultery.**
- 2. Now, I think we know that Jesus is talking about when He says “lustful intent.” I think The Message paraphrase gets at the meaning of verses 27-28 when it says, “You know the next commandment pretty well, too: ‘Don't go to bed with another's spouse.’ But don't think you've preserved your virtue simply by staying**

out of bed. Your heart can be corrupted by lust even quicker than your body. Those ogling looks you think nobody notices—they also corrupt.”

3. Some with particularly sensitive consciences have understood Jesus to mean that merely noticing the beauty of another person is a violation of what Jesus says here. But Jesus isn’t talking about noticing that someone is beautiful or handsome. We know what He’s talking about, don’t we? He’s talking about a lingering look. A sensual stare. A lustful gawking. A look that turns a beautiful or handsome image bearer of God into an object for your own sexual gratification, even if only in your mind.
4. Chuck Quarles points out that the verb here is a present participle and could be translated “everyone who keeps on looking.” We cannot hide our eyes from ever noticing a beautiful or handsome person. But you can notice a person’s beauty without allowing your mind to go somewhere you know it shouldn’t go.
5. Jesus makes it clear here that His concern is the heart when He says that “everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her **IN HIS HEART**.”
6. Jesus’ emphasis on the heart here is not a new emphasis. The Bible, including the Old Testament, has a lot to say about the heart.
 - a. Proverbs 4:23 exhorts us, “Keep your **HEART** with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”
 - b. And we know that we are to “Trust in the Lord with all [our] **HEART**, and...not lean on [our] own understanding” (Prov. 3:5).
 - c. David cried out to God in Psalm 51, “Create in me a clean **HEART**, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10).
 - d. Jesus taught, “The good person out of the good treasure of his **HEART** produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the **HEART** his mouth speaks” (Lk. 6:45).

- e. And in Matthew 15:19, Jesus says, “For out of the **HEART** come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.”

7. When we understand that the seventh commandment deals also with the lust in our hearts, we realize that the list of things the seventh commandment prohibits is much broader than just adultery.
 - a. We know that the Bible has quite a lot to say about sexual immorality. And it all starts with God’s design. As we’ve seen, God designed sex for the marriage relationship between one man and one woman. So, anything outside of that is a violation of the seventh commandment.
 - b. In fact, the Bible contains specific commands against not just adultery, but fornication, incest, homosexuality, prostitution, bestiality, sexual violence, and more. And the Bible urges us, in response to all of these, to “flee sexual immorality” (1 Cor. 6:18).
 - c. But understand that God’s Law concerning sex is not just a list of rules God likes because God likes giving rules. God’s Law isn’t oppressive. God isn’t a prude.
 - d. No, God’s Law is good for us. God gives us His rules concerning sex because He cares about us. He wants us to enjoy His good gift the way that He intended for it to be enjoyed in creation.
 - e. He knows the destructive power of sex when we step outside of His design. He wants to protect us from that. He wants us to experience the goodness and joy of sex the way He designed it.
8. We should point out that one of the implications of Jesus’ teaching here is that sinful sexual activity with our bodies is preceded by sinful sexual fantasy in our hearts and our minds.

- a. It's not just that looking at a woman with lustful intent is adultery of the heart, though that is certainly true. That's what Jesus says here. But it's also that looking at a woman with lustful intent is a step down a path that leads to sexual sin with the body.
- b. The most well-known example of this in the Bible is King David. We read about it in 2 Samuel 11. You remember the story, don't you? "It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful" (2 Sam. 11:2).
- c. Now, commentators disagree about David's intent in walking around on the roof of the palace late in the afternoon. It's certainly possible that David was there to see what He could see. The text doesn't say that explicitly, so we can't say for sure. Let's assume for the sake of argument that David's motives in walking on the roof were pure.
- d. He was just getting some fresh air when suddenly he saw a beautiful woman taking a bath. Now, if David's motives in walking on the roof were pure, he had not yet sinned at this point. David could have realized that this wasn't a good place for him to be at this time. He could have gone back inside. He could have fled sexual immorality.
- e. But we know that David's mind began to run wild with sexual fantasy because the text says that David "sent and inquired about the woman." We know from what transpired next that David did not have good intentions with his inquiry.
- f. David was told, "Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" But that didn't stop Him. The text says that "David sent messengers and took her, and she came to him, and he lay with her."

- g. The sinful lust that started in David's heart and mind quickly grew into full-blown sexual immorality that was at a minimum an abuse of David's power as king.
 - h. But it started in David's heart and mind. Just like it does for you and me.
9. Where we think of David as an example of grievous sexual sin in the Bible, we think of Joseph as an example of fleeing sexual immorality. We read about it in Genesis 39.
- a. Joseph was placed in charge of Potiphar's house. Potiphar had given him charge over everything. Nothing was kept back from him. Except for Potiphar's wife.
 - b. The text says that "Joseph was handsome in form and appearance." Potiphar's wife certainly noticed because "after a time, [she] cast her eyes on Joseph and said, 'Lie with me.'"
 - c. But how did Joseph respond? He refused. He said, "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"
 - d. But she persisted. Day after day she "spoke to Joseph" in an attempt to seduce him. But "he would not listen to her."
 - e. Until one day she had had enough. She caught him by his garment and said, "Lie with me." Joseph left his garment in her hand and fled from the house.
 - f. You know the rest of the story. Joseph's fleeing did not keep Potiphar's wife from lying about Joseph to her husband, which led to Joseph's imprisonment.
 - g. But the point is that at every turn, Joseph fled from sexual immorality. It seems clear from the text that he didn't even entertain the thought of it, not even for a minute.
 - h. In that, Joseph is an example to us.

Because followers of Jesus flee sexual immorality. Which leads right to my final point this morning...

III. Followers of Jesus do whatever it takes (Matt. 5:29-30).

Look at verses 29-30. (Read vs. 29-30)

The principle here is that followers of Jesus do whatever it takes to flee sexual immorality and pursue sexual purity because the consequences of sexual sin are so serious.

A. Let's talk first about the consequences.

1. Jesus says in verse 29, "For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell." And again, in verse 30, He says, "For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell."
2. So, what is the consequence for sexual sin? Hell. Do you see the seriousness of what we're talking about this morning? Jesus doesn't mince words.
3. Listen to Paul in 1 Corinthians 6, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10).
4. Paul doesn't single out sexual sin in 1 Corinthians 6 as a special class of sin, but he does list it among sins that will prevent us from inheriting the kingdom of God.
5. The truth is that all unrepentant sin will lead you to hell, but we should acknowledge that when left unaddressed, sexual sin can establish a particular kind of stronghold in our lives that makes genuine repentance very very difficult.

B. Which is why Jesus says that we must be willing to do whatever it takes to flee sexual immorality and pursue sexual purity.

1. "If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away." "And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away."

2. Now, Jesus is speaking hyperbolically here. He is not advocating self-mutilation as the means for dealing with sexual sin.
3. But He speaks this way for a reason. He wants us to understand and feel the weight of this. This is no small matter. Sexual sin is serious business. And followers of Jesus must be willing to do whatever it takes to flee sexual immorality and pursue sexual purity.

Conclusion: Now, I want to conclude this morning with some words of application.

1. If you are caught in sexual sin, you need to understand the seriousness of it and do whatever it takes to flee sexual immorality and pursue sexual purity.

Sexual sin will lead you to hell. And it will destroy your life here in the meantime. Cut it off. Do whatever it takes. If you are in a sexual relationship with someone and you are not married, you have three choices if you're going to follow Jesus: 1) Commit together to flee from sexual immorality, 2) Get married, or 3) End the relationship. If your partner isn't interested in #1 or #2, see #3. End the relationship. It is better for you to lose a relationship than that your body be thrown into hell.

2. The most pervasive form of sexual immorality in our culture today is pornography.

Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount strike right at the root of this issue. "Everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Never in human history have people had more access to sexually explicit material than right now through televisions, computers, and especially smart phones.

Maybe you can't handle having a smart phone. Maybe you can't handle having unfettered access to the internet. Cut it off. Do whatever it takes to flee sexual immorality and pursue sexual purity.

And parents, we have to protect our kids and teenagers. I don't want to give you a legalistic rule that you must follow regarding smart phones, but I do want to tell you that if you are giving your child or teenager a

smart phone without any restrictions on the kind of material they can access on that phone, you are setting them up for failure. And if you're giving them one with restrictions, you better make sure they aren't able to circumvent those restrictions.

Our children have an enemy who seeks to steal, kill, and destroy them. And it is your responsibility, parents, to help protect your children from that enemy. One of the most effective tools in the enemy's toolbox is pornography.

3. If you are caught in sexual sin, and undoubtedly, there are people in this room who are, we want to help you.

Whatever it is. Lust. Pornography. Fornication. Homosexuality. Adultery. Something else. Whatever it is. We want to help you.

That's what the body of Christ is about. We help one another follow Jesus. We come alongside one another. We stir one another up to love and good works. We challenge one another. We encourage one another. We rebuke one another. We hold one another accountable.

If you are caught in sexual sin, you may need to tell someone so that you can receive the help you need. You don't have to fight this battle alone. There are brothers and sisters in Christ in this church who want to help you.

You can come to me or one of our other elders. There are also mature, godly ladies in our church who are willing to walk alongside you as you flee sexual immorality and pursue sexual purity.

4. If you are caught in sexual sin, understand that there is grace and forgiveness for you in Jesus.

Confess your sin to God. Turn away from your sin. And trust in the righteousness of Jesus. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The gospel of Jesus Christ is for all kinds of sinners, including sexual sinners. Repent of your sin. Find grace and forgiveness in Jesus. And rely upon the work of the Holy Spirit in your life to help you flee from sexual immorality.