

Matthew 5:27-28

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 lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

This is a section of scripture which is part of a discussion where Christ was teaching a large group on the larger purpose of the law. I like this particular portion of His teaching but it can very be difficult to grasp just how this is applied practically in one's life.

27 "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; - notice how Christ frames up what He is going to say "You have heard that it was said." Seems like an interesting way to begin to talk about one of the 10 commandments, right? You have heard it said, well yes and the one who said it was God.

Exodus 20:1,3,12-14 (NASB) 1 Then God spoke all these words, saying...3 "You shall have no other gods before Me...12 "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you. 13 "You shall not murder.
14 "You shall not commit adultery...

but - This is an important word to begin verse 28. Christ is getting ready to say something about this passage was either inaccurate on God's part or on man's interpretation of this passage. For example when we use the word but in language it means that what has been said previously is getting ready to be contrasted. Like when I say something like the following "I really like this person but....," "This food tastes good but..."

What we see is that Christ is getting ready to clarify something about the passage:

28 but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

What did Christ just do? He just took this passage from something that was black and white to something much, much more difficult to measure. He took something objective in man's eyes and made it subjective.

If we are honest with ourselves we have to admit **we love to measure ourselves**. If I can know just how far I am able to go and keep from sinning then I want to know that boundary. While it's important to know that boundary, as humans we can abuse that knowledge by focusing on the boundary and not focusing on Him.

This would have been a radical thing to say by Jesus to these Jewish people. For a group of people who liked to focus on the boundaries (legalism).

But in actuality Jesus took the passage and just told man what the commandment was always intended to be about.

This is what our study is going to focus on, what this law and every law that God ever put in front of man was intended to be about.

The answer to what this was supposed to be about is in the passage.

It's always interesting to me how God intends something to mean one thing and we will typically view it either completely different or at least in part. In order to prove that let's do an experiment:

EVERYONE CLOSE YOUR EYES

Many times when I have heard the passage above quoted, here is what I hear

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 lust for her has already committed adultery with her..."

What's different? What's different is the entire point of the passage gets left off. *Our hearts!*

I believe the best way to grasp what Christ is discussing here is to talk about a physician.

When one goes to see a doctor typically we go to present to the doctor a list of our symptoms that we are having and the doctor will listen to our list or run some tests and try to get down to the root cause of our problems.

If we had an internal bleed in our body and we went to the doctor and said "Doc, I am having pain here and getting headaches and I'm having trouble sleeping at night." If the doctor gave us some pain medicine and aspirin for the headaches and a sleeping pill at night, we would probably leave wondering why the doctor only treated my surface symptoms and didn't really do anything to treat what obviously seems to be going on internally.

Jesus referred to Himself as a physician:

Mark 2:16-17 (NASB) 16 When the scribes of the Pharisees saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, "Why is He eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners?" 17 And hearing this, Jesus *said to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Like any good physician Christ understands that in order to properly treat a patient a physician must treat the root cause. Notice again then what Christ is focusing on in His statement.

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 lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

What is Christ identifying as the root of the problem...**the heart**. What is He then calling a symptom of the root problem...**Adultery!**

In the Church today I wonder if we are too focused on the symptom and not the root cause when it comes to sin. What would the Church look like if we became focused on treating our root problem instead simply treating the outward symptoms? In the passage Christ is referring to adultery but one could substitute lying, drunkenness, homosexuality etc. in the line and it wouldn't change the root problem. The root problem is the heart.

Remember when Christ said the following:

Mark 7:14-23 (NASB) 14 After He called the crowd to Him again, He began saying to them, "Listen to Me, all of you, and understand: 15 there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man. 16 ["If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear."] 17 When he had left the crowd and entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable. 18 And He *said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, 19 because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (Thus He declared all foods clean.) 20 And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. 21 "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, 22 deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. 23 "All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

This is an amazing truth and further makes the point Christ was saying in our adultery passage. **We serve a God that is not simply interested in our actions and works.** We serve a God that wants **our hearts**, He desires a relationship much deeper than surface actions from us.

There is a major truth here that needs to be established then. Christ loves you for WHO you are, not WHAT YOU DO. This means then that you have VALUE to Him because of who you are.

To illustrate that point let's look at something Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (NASB) 9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Let's review an important word in 1 Corinthians 6, that word is **unrighteous**. Before going into the long list people who won't get into the kingdom he first calls them unrighteous. What makes a person righteous?

Romans 5:19 (NASB) 19 For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

We are made righteous by trusting in Christ. So these people because they haven't trusted in Christ are first called unrighteous and then labeled with these sins.

Revelation 20:11-13 (NASB) 11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.

Paul makes a very important point in verse 11 in 1 Corinthians: ***“Such were some of you...”***

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NASB) 17 Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

Titus 3:5-7 (NASB) 5 He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Romans 8:14 (NLT) For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.

Galatians 3:26 (NASB) 26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

Notice we are not called swindlers, revilers, thieves etc. Because that is not how He views us due to Christ's blood.

Our identity is no longer tied to our actions our identity is tied to Him.

Colossians 3:3 (NASB) 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

So what are we now called by Him? New Creations, Children, Sons & Daughters, hidden and another great word Heirs!

So in going back to our verse let's tie in what Christ is telling us then:

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 lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

When Jesus says something is sin we can be certain then that it's sin.

Here is what scripture says sin does:

Isaiah 59:2 (NASB) 2 But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your

God, And your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.

Our sin separates us from Him. Not eternally but our current harmony with Him is interrupted. Our relationship with Him has become strained.

If Jesus says looking at another person with impure thoughts is sin then that means separation or disharmony in our relationship doesn't happen when the physical act is performed **disharmony happens when my heart was drawn away. I've been walking in sin that needs to be dealt with then, much longer than I might realize.**

He's saying "In order for us to have a **healthy relationship** I must have **your heart**"

Jeremiah 29:13 (NASB) 13 'You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.

Our root problem is a sick and deceitful heart:

Jeremiah 17:9 (NASB) 9 "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it?"

APPLICATION

Let's see how this practically plays out with one of the most famous bible stories as it relates to the sin of adultery.

Psalms 51:4-6,10,16-17,19 (NASB) 4 Against You, You only, I have sinned And done what is evil in Your sight, So that You are justified when You speak And blameless when You judge. 5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me. 6 Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, And in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom...10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me...16 For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering. 17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise...19 Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices, In burnt offering and whole burnt offering; Then young bulls will be offered on Your altar.

4 Against You, You only, I have sinned...

David is acknowledging that his sin started when his heart strayed from his most important and primary relationship - his relationship with his Heavenly Father.

5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.

Conceived - sperm fertilizing an egg.

David is saying I was born a sinner, there was never a point when I was innocent. In other words I was born with this unfortunate propensity to wander from You.

Also if you've ever wondered when the Bible says life happens we have evidence here that it begins at conception.

6 Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.

Hidden part - it can be easy to read that and misinterpret that David is speaking of the part of himself that he keeps hidden from others or from God. But that isn't an accurate way of interpreting this verse. Notice David says in the hidden part obviously referring to a part of himself that is hidden from either himself or God.

Hebrews 4:13 (NASB) 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

Psalms 44:21 (NASB) 21 Would not God find this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart.

The reality is that what David is saying is this. God I have parts of me that are hidden from *me*. My sin nature runs so deep there are things about me that I need you to reveal to me and then teach me truth about so that I can be changed from the inside out. There is something inside of me that I need to hear truth about concerning my lust problem. Please show me what that is and then please give me the truth and wisdom on how to handle it.

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

David knows it's his sinful heart that needs cleaned up. Just asking him to clean up his actions doesn't quite scratch the surface of what needs to change. His heart has to change.

1 Kings 8:39 (NASB) then hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and forgive and act and render to each according to all his ways, whose heart You know, for You alone know the hearts of all the sons of men,

1 John 1:9 (NASB) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

16 For You do not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; You are not pleased with burnt offering.

Sacrifice and Burnt Offering - sacrifices and burnt offerings were things that were *required* under Levitical law. They were required because God required them. How then can David say He doesn't delight in them if He requires them?

The answer is in the following verses:

17 The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not despise...19 Then You will delight in righteous sacrifices, In burnt offering and whole burnt offering; Then young bulls will be offered on Your altar.

We see in these verses what's behind those Levitical requirements that God truly desires...**a broken spirit and broken heart!**

What is David telling us? The **same thing** Jesus is telling us!

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 lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Going back to Christ's words concerning our passage in Matthew. **Christ is not saying that the sin of adultery is ok.** As a matter of fact it's the opposite. He's encouraging us to engage Him on a tremendously deep level. A level that rises above the transactional level of do's and don'ts, a level that focuses on where my heart is with Him at all times.

When we understand this, a new reality forms for us about the commandments and the Law.

The Commandments are not meant to be only a list of do's and don'ts they are meant to be barometers of where our hearts are with Him.

Jeremiah 17:9-10 (NASB) 9 "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? 10 "I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds.

David again provides practical application for us:

Psalms 139:23-24 (NASB) 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; 24 And see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.

God is not going to reduce our relationship with Him to a list of **do's and don'ts**. He isn't going to have a transactionary relationship with you and me. He is interested in having ***all*** of us. He is interested in having a real, genuine healthy relationship with you and me.

That's what love looks like! Would you want a savior that wants any other type of relationship than that with you?