

THE LOOK THAT IS ADULTERY

The section in the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew 5:21-48 is often called “The Six Antitheses” because all six sections begin with some variation of Christ saying, **“But I say to you...”**. (cf. Mt. 5:21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43). Here Christ explains that what they had been taught about the mere EXTERNAL emphasis of law is to have a DEEPER corresponding INTERNAL reality.

Six Sections – Six Topics

- 1) Murder/Anger – Mt. 5:21-26
- 2) Adultery – Mt. 5:27-3
- 3) Divorce – Mt. 5:31-32
- 4) Oaths – Mt. 5:33-37
- 5) Vengeance – Mt. 5:38-42
- 6) Love for Enemies – Mt. 5:43-48

At root, these are all heart issues. In Matthew 5:27-28, Christ shows us the deeper heart issues related to adultery. And He shows us that these issues potentially relate to every one of us, no matter our station in life.

Matthew 5:27 (NKJV)

27 “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’

This was an accurate accounting of the 7th commandment as found in Ex. 20:14 and Deut. 5:18, which simply said, **“You shall not commit adultery.”**

Adultery is a specific sexual sin regarding marital unfaithfulness. It is to be sexually unfaithful to your marriage partner. God ordained marriage to be between one man and one woman, till death do them part. As ordained by God, marriage is to be FOR LIFE (cf. Rom. 7:2-3).

The sexual union denotes that the two “shall become one flesh”. But marriage is more than just a sexual union. Just because people have sex does not mean they are married. In the eyes of God, when people get married, God performs a spiritual union in which He joins them together. In Matthew 19:6 Jesus said, **“what God has joined together, let not man separate.”** This is God’s doing, and it is not to be separated by man. Thus, marriage is AN ACT OF GOD! God is involved! And that makes it serious!

What makes marriage to be marriage (biblically speaking) is that it is a covenant relationship between a man and a woman. Contracts are made between people, but a COVENANT relationship brings God into the equation. A covenant relationship is one in which one makes a binding commitment before God and is thereafter accountable to God for it (cf. Mal. 2:14).

To MAKE a covenant in the Old Testament literally meant "TO CUT" a covenant (cf. Gen. 15:18). The people would cut animals up and make an "aisle" formed by the dead animal parts. The parties to the covenant would then walk together between the bloody pieces signifying, "If I don't keep my part, may God cause this to happen to me" (cf. Gen. 15; Jer. 34:18).

A COVENANT was a sacred binding commitment which one was responsible to keep before God on pain of death for violation. It is for this reason that under the Mosaic Law in the OT the penalty for adultery was DEATH (cf. Lev. 20:10).

Relatively few seem to take marriage very seriously today! It is seen more as a CONTRACT before men rather than a COVENANT before God. The problem is that there is so little FEAR of God. Having "**no fear of God**" describes the unbelieving world (cf. Rom. 3:18). To fear God is to reverence Him. It is to take accountability to Him seriously!

If one truly "fears" God, that will be reflected in life, especially in the matter of a sacred binding covenant commitment. Having a fear of God sees marriage in reference to God.

Adultery is serious because of how it violates the innocent party, but even more important, it is deadly serious because it violates a covenant commitment made before God. Remember, in context, Jesus is addressing disciples who have a relationship with God.

The Jews had respect for the 7th commandment on a physical level. But they had figured out ways to get around the legislation against adultery. You could lust all day – just as long as you never actually committed physical adultery, you were considered okay.

But Jesus had something to say about this.

Matthew 5:28 (NKJV)

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

How is that for a higher standard? Jesus said it is not enough to merely refrain from the actual physical act of adultery, one must also abstain from even LUSTING after a woman in the heart! Jesus takes it deeper into the realm of the heart! True, one is commanded not to commit physical adultery, but beyond that Jesus says to even lust for a woman who is not your wife is to commit adultery with her in the heart!

Before God one is guilty of adultery long before the actual act. Even the desire to have sex with a woman not your wife is to be guilty of adultery in the heart. The real deeper issue is that of the HEART!

The Jesus standard is a HEART standard! ***"The law forbade the act of adultery; Jesus forbids the desire."*** (William MacDonald)

A major problem for the whole of society is that pornography is everywhere. The Bible says “the lust of the eyes” defines what the world is about.

Proverbs 27:20 (NKJV)

20 Hell and Destruction are never full; So the eyes of man are never satisfied.

It has well been said, ***"You can't help the first look, but you are accountable for the second one"***. True, but the problem today is that society more and more holds this right in our face. It is a constant thing. That is not an excuse, but it is a reality. If you use social media at all you are going to have to deal with this. So how can we live a life pleasing to God in the context of a pornified society?

1. Fill the heart with God's Word (Ps. 119:9-11).

“God's Word must be so strongly fixed in our minds that it becomes the dominant influence in our thoughts, our attitudes, and our actions.”

– ***Jerry Bridges***

If you are not filling your heart with God's Word I don't see how you are going to withstand the onslaught of sexual temptation on constant parade.

2. Stay close to the throne of grace (Heb. 4:15-16).

3. Be intimately involved in the fellowship of accountability with God's people (Heb. 10:24-25).

4. Make no provision for the flesh (Rom. 13:13-14).

The Bible calls us to holy living (cf. 1 Pet. 1:15-16). Pure religion before God is to “**keep oneself unspotted from the world.**” (Ja. 1:27). Our very sanctification is to live lives of sexual purity (cf. 1 Thess. 4:3-8). Let us not be conformed to the world, rather let us constantly be renewing our mind (cf. Rom. 12:2). Sanctification not only has to do with deeds but also with our thoughts (cf. 2 Cor. 7:1, 1 Pet. 2:11).

As the culture becomes coarser and coarser let us get CLOSER and CLOSER to God and His children!

Warren Wiersbe shares the following story.

“When we visited Mammoth Cave in Kentucky, I was impressed with the maze of tunnels and dense darkness when the lights were turned off. When we got to the ‘Pulpit Rock,’ the man in charge of the tour gave a five-word sermon from it: ‘**Stay close to your guide.**’”

For these dark times that is good counsel indeed. Don’t wander off into the dark by yourself – stay close to your guide – the GOOD SHEPHERD. It’s the only safe place to be.