Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Who Is an Adulterer? Part 2
Scripture: Matthew 5:27-30
Code: 2216

Again tonight we have the privilege of looking at the 5th chapter of Matthew in our study, and in our last study together we began an examination of verses 27 through 30 and we're going to continue that tonight as we prepare for the Lord's Table at the conclusion of our fellowship.
Matthew chapter 5 verses 27 through 30 let me read them as you follow. "Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery; But I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."
Obviously our Lord is talking here about sin. And this is really the topic of His message from verse 21 through verse 48 of chapter 5. It is a message on the divine definition of sin. In Numbers 32 and 23 it says, "Be sure your sin will find you out." Sometime back the New York Times ran the following article: "The thief was sure that the church was a safe hideout. Just inside he spied a rope up to the garret. Up he climbed only to hear the church bell ringing his whereabouts. A Mexico City man snatched a woman's purse and ran into a doorway to hide. It turned out to be the doorway of the police station where he was questioned and later identified by his victim. Shoplifting in a department store in Rochester, New York, a man picked up an alarm clock and headed for the nearest exit. The clock concealed under his coat went off before he could get out of the store and brought the detectives running. A Canadian who had a custom built radio stolen from his automobile advertised in the local paper for a custom built radio. The first person to contact him about the advertisement was the thief. A Glasgow pickpocket got a 60-day prison term after trying his luck on an excursion boat carrying 20 police officers and their wives. Police in Palo Alto seized a suspect as he stood in a post office admiring his wanted poster." "Be sure your sin will find you out." Sin devastates life.
In this particular place in Matthew chapter 5 the sin of the Jewish leaders and the sin of the people listening to Christ finds them out. Jesus unmasks their hypocrisy, they're caught, they're trapped, they're unmasked, they're revealed, they're shown to be exactly what they are, sinful people. And precisely what our Lord is doing in this passage is giving them a true picture of their sinfulness. The things that they had so well concealed He reveals. The righteousness which they had felt was theirs He tears down and leaves them stark naked and sinful. In fact what He does is to reveal the truth about the sinful heart of man, going deep inside to the real problem.
As we've been seeing in our study of Matthew men inevitably and invariably try to invent religions of human achievement. Men try to invent self-righteous systems based on their own standards. They try

to invent systems that justify themselves, and that is precisely what the Judaism of Jesus' time had done. They had substituted their own system for the truth of God's revelation, and their own system was a system of external rules ah, a system of external ritual, a system of behavior with no thought for attitude or motive or the heart. And because they kept certain external rules, because they managed to fulfill certain external ritual they convinced themselves that thereby they were righteous. But this was inadequate and that's why chapter 5, verse 20 is the key: unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you'll never enter the kingdom. True righteousness is beyond anything you now have.

And so Jesus in, in verses 21 through 48 of the Sermon on the Mount destroys the self-righteous system by tearing down their supposed holiness and revealing the fact that in their hearts they were wretched, vile, evil sinners and the heartis the issue with God. No matter how religious they looked on the outside the fact is they were sinful on the inside. He presents a standard they can't keep, and thus faces them with a sin problem for which they have no remedy.

At the end of chapter 5 in verse 48 He says, "Be ye, therefore, perfect, even as your Father, who is in heaven, is perfect." That is the righteousness My kingdom demands. And obviously they couldn't keep it, therein lies the frustration--there is no remedy for their sin situation. And of course from there they are driven to a righteousness not their own, a righteousness in fact offered to them in Jesus Christ. And so what He's really doing here as He presents a definition of sin is forcing them to see the need of a Savior, knowing full well He will offer Himself as that Savior. They must recognize that in themselves there is no resource to solve the sin problem; they are desperately in need of someone who can and He is just that someone.

Now the key to the way He handles this is in the twofold phrase that He uses, "Ye have heard, but I say." And in that He is contrasting their system with truth, He is contrasting their definition of sin with God's definition of sin--He is contrasting their standard with a divine standard. The traditional rabbinic system said only the external matters. If you don't murder and you don't commit adultery you're alright. Jesus said, but I say unto you, if you're angry or if you even think about it you're just as guilty because God is interested in the inside. And thus does He contrast Himself and the view that God laid down with the system that existed in their minds.

Now you'll remember that last week we had a very important message, and I was thrilled with the re-sponse to it. But we showed you that always in the Old Testament, not just the New, God was concerned about a heart relationship, that the issue was always loving the Lord your God and your neighbor as your-self, that therewas always the relationship, and that the Ten Commandments and the Mosaic law was only a means for regulating a love relationship. God has always been concerned about the heart. And that is the case in this particular sermon as Jesus goes right to their hearts and unbares the evil, vile, sinfulness that is there be-hind the facade of their religious activity. Psalm 119:96 says, "Thy commandment is very broad." And the commandment of God was a lot broader than they thought; they had narrowed it down only to the ex-ternal and our Lord drives it in to the internal.

Now let me remind you of this. Jesus in His sermon began with a message about blessedness, blessed, blessed, blessed, blessed from verses 3 to 12. But in order for one to know that blessedness, and by the way this is a good format for presenting the Gospel, you start with the promise of blessedness. But in order to know that blessedness you must know the proper definition of sin, because sin stands in the way of blessing, and sin has to be dealt with and removed. And so from blessedness to a doctrine of sin, well the Lord makes a transition, and as I said in verse 21 He begins to talk about sin.

Now let me just say in general before we look at the passage itself that we learn from this that it's essential to deal with sin. You cannot preach Christ, you cannot present the Gospel unless you deal with sin, unless you give a definition of sin because that is the barrier, that is the issue. And if we do not properly understand sin, mark this, we will not understand anything else that God does.

For example, I'll give ya three illustrations of that, unless one understands the truth about sin he can never understand the truth about salvation. You cannot understand the meaning of salvation unless you understand the meaning of sin. You see the Pharisees and the scribes, now mark this, had such a superficial view of sin that they were able to accommodate it with a superficial view of salvation. They saw sin as simply a matter of what we do; therefore salvation was a matter of what we do. So in their minimal definition of sin they, they were left with a minimal requirement for salvation, which they then assumed they themselves could accomplish.

Now, had they seen sin as a deep down heart problem they would have known that that was far beyond theirs to change. They couldn't do it if they'd understood that. And so it is that the, the more we comprehend the heinousness of sin the more we understand the meaning of salvation. The deeper the disease the greater the remedy, that's the point. And as long as people think of sin superficially, as long as they think of sin minimally, as long as they make light of sin then salvation is a minor thing too. But when you understand as our Lord is saying that sin is something heinous, sin is something deep, sin is something so penetrating that it reaches down into the warp and woof of a mans being so deeply that it's absolutely unchangeable except by the miracle of God, then you'll understand that only God can bring salvation. And that is what our Lord wants them to understand. You will never understand the meaning of the cross, you will never understand why Jesus had to die, you will never understand why when He had legions of angels who could have come to His aid, He never used them, you will never understand why He said, "I must fulfill all righteousness," you will never understand what His death means until you understand how evil sin is and how deeply stained is the heart of every man that He would have to go to that extreme to accomplish salvation. Someone has written, there was no other good enough to pay the price of sin, He only could unlock the gate of heaven and let us in. Sin is so powerful and so deep that only Jesus Christ can change it, only Jesus Christ can alter it. That in fact is the message of Romans chapter 3 through chapter 6.

A second thought, unless you understand the truth about sin you will never understand the right approach to proclamation. Not only salvation but proclamation. Now what I mean by that is this, and this is a great concern to me and I've preached on this off and on, but if you do not understand the depth of sin then you do not know how to proclaim the Gospel. Now what we have in our Christian

culture today is we have very superficial Gospel presentations. Ah, it's, it's almost methodological, it's almost uhm, pie in the sky, it's almost, how would you like to have a happy time? It's, it's so very shallow in many cases, not always but in many cases. Some call it easy-believism; others call it cheap grace--people running around saying, come to Jesus, get born again. Self-centered appeals, emotional appeals, all kinds of superficial approaches to evangelism.

And I really feel that behind this is a failure to grapple with the reality of the heinousness of sin. Because if we know the power of sin then we know it isn't enough to tell somebody, well, why don't you just accept Jesus and He'll make your life happy? It isn't enough to say so...to somebody, wouldn't you like to go to heaven and wouldn't you like to be happy and have peace and joy and everything? Just sign on the dotted line and say you believe in Jesus and pray a little prayer, you see. If we really understood how deep and stained men's hearts are with sin, if we understood how powerful the hold of sin is, so power-ful that it casts men into an eternal hell, if we understood that then our evangelism would be more directedat the damning character of sin, first of all before it comes to the point of inviting them to make a decision. They must understand the problem.

And that's why biblically speaking, and mark this, biblically speaking evangelism always begins by presenting the law before grace. You must preach law, you must preach judgment, you must preach condemnation. And so Romans begins this way, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men." Paul starts out by condemning. Chapter 2 condemns again, chapter 3 condemns again so that every mouth is stopped. And then he says, the righteousness of Christ is available to you. And so there must be a preaching of the divine standard, there must be preaching of a holy law, there must be preaching of that which God says is right, and then there can be the message of how we come to know the relationship that makes that possible. And I believe our evangelism must confront people with the holiness of God, it must reveal His demands for an inner heart righteousness. I believe our evangelism must focus on mans inability to meet God's standard, and we must make men desperate like Jesus wanted to make the Pharisees, the scribes and the multitude desperate so that they stand in fear of the doom of judgment ready to be cast into hell and they cry out for a Savior who can deliver them from a problem too deep for them to handle.

Now that was Jesus' approach. And as I said it was basically designed to drive men to desperation. More than anybody else in the whole Bible Jesus preached hell. He preached hell. People don't like to even talk about it. He preached that sin sends people to an eternal hell, where the worm never dies and the fire is not quenched, where there is gnashing of teeth and weeping and wailing. Jesus preached it because that's where it all had to begin. And so evangelism and proclamation must start with the holiness of God, as over against the sinfulness of man, and then the demands of that holy God. And the hopeless and helpless man who can't fulfill them is then driven to the inevitability of punishment, the ultimate reality of hell. And the only escape is someone else to come along and change his vile heart, and at that point Jesus Christ moves in to offer the deliverance that He alone can give.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones, the great preacher of England said, "You can have a psychological belief in the Lord Jesus Christ but a true belief sees hin...in Him one who delivers us from the curse of the law. True evangelism starts like that and obviously is primarily a call to repentance." End quote. The Apostle Paul said that we are to call men to repentance toward God and then faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And what Jesus is saying to these people is, you may not have killed anybody and you may not have commit adultery but in your hearts you have been angry and in yourhearts you have hated and in your hearts you have lusted and you are as vile as a murderer and as an adulterer. And in desperation they are driven to the need of an outside Savior who can change their evil hearts. Men can modify their behavior, believe it, they can. Peer pressure, pride, all of those things, piosity, a fear of rejection can force people to behave in a certain way, but only God can change a heart.

There's a third thought I had on this. Unless we understand the truth about sin we can never really understand salvation, we can never really understand proclamation, and we can neverreally understand sanctification. Unless we understand the meaning of sin we don't know what it is to be made holy in Christ, do we? We don't understand the magnanimity of the change. You don't understand what God has made you in Christ unless you know what you were. You can't be thanking and praising Him for the glory of the transformation unless you know what it involved.

And we've not only suffered from superficial evangelism and such, but we've suffered from very, very shallow concepts of holiness and sanctification. Usually it goes like this, we think we're holy because of the things we do or don't do. So we don't go to certain places, we don't say certain things, we don't do the things the world does. And we feel that because we don't say or do things or go places that we're alright. And really it's the ugly head of self-righteousness. Because God is always concerned not so much with what we do and what we say and where we go, though He is concerned with that, but He's more concerned with what's behind it, what we think in our minds and hearts. There are the pious and the self-satisfied and the smug who think that because they don't do certain things and they do other things that they are justified, and that's because they never really examine the evil of their hearts. And that's what the Lord Jesus is forcing men to do as He preaches this great sermon.

Holiness, listen, for God is always a matter of the heart. Proverbs 23:7, "As a man thinketh in his heart," what? "so is he." That's where the divine evaluation takes place. In Matthew's Gospel further on, in chapter 15 and verse 16 we read this, "And Jesus said, Are you also yet without understanding?" You haven't figured it out; you don't know God's standard yet? You don't know where the real problem is?

"Do not ye yet understand," Matthew 15:17, "that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the stomach, and is cast out into the draught?" In other words it goes through the process of elimination. "But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and they defile the man." In other words it isn't what you take in that defiles you it's what comes up and goes out. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, and blasphemies." Where do those all originate? In the heart.

Listen, before you ever murder you think it in your heart, before you ever commit adultery you think it in your heart, before you ever fornicate you think it in your heart, before you ever steal you think it in

your heart. It is the heart that spews out the garbage that defiles man because "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; and who can know it?" said Jeremiah. And so it isn't the external, our Lord is saying, it's the heart, and He unbares the heart, He rips off the facade of the super-religious who would glorify themselves as if they stand absolved, and shows that the only thing that He's concerned about is the heart.

So, both the Old Testament and the New Testament as we saw last week preach the same Good News. Man is a sinner; that sin is deep down in his heart, in his nature. Man is powerless to change that. God comes along and offers a relationship by which He and He alone will change that man's heart. In...it was clear back in Ezekiel wasn't it? That God said, "I will give you a new heart. I will take away the stony heart, and give you a heart of flesh." A new heart is what a man needs. That's what Jesus wants those who listen to hear. They thought as long as they cleaned the outside of the plate and the cup they were okay. Jesus says you have to clean the inside, that's the issue.

Let's see how He gets at it with the illustration of adultery in verse 27. On your outline you'll notice three points, the deed, the desire, and the deliverance. It's very simple, very clear.

First of all, the deed. "You have heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery." The phrase "by them of old" isn't in all of the older manuscripts. It's certainly fitting that it's there in a sense because it's used elsewhere in this same section, but better manuscripts leave it out, so we'll omit it. "You have heard that it was said, thou shalt not commit adultery." Now that's the deed, God's law said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Exodus chapter 20 verse 14. Deuteronomy where you have deutero nomos, the second law, it's repeated in 5:18, "Neither shalt thou commit adultery." It's very clear; the Bible leaves absolutely no question about this particular sin. The deed is condemned, it is an evil deed.

In Job 31:9 it says, "If mine heart have been deceived by a woman, or if I have laid wait at my neighbor's door, Then let my wife grind unto another, and let others bow down upon her; For this is an heinous crime; yea, it is an iniquity to be punished by the judges. For it is a fire that consumeth to destruction, and would root out all mine increase." It is an heinous crime to commit adultery, it is a vile, evil, wretched manifestation of a vile heart. And the Bible is very clear about it in Exodus 18 and uh, rather in Leviticus 18 and Leviticus 20 the penalty could be death. A very serious crime ending in death for the one who committed it. So we see the deed condemned by God.

Now you'll notice that in our passage in Matthew it was the leaders, the rabbinic tradition that said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." They were right, they weren't wrong; we aren'timplying that at all. We are only saying they never went far enough. They were right, it was evil, God did say, don't do it, it was a serious crime and still is.

Now let me talk for a moment about the worditself; the word adultery, it's a very simple word. The root means this: unlawful intercourse with the spouse of someone else. That's basically the technical meaning--a physical, sexual relationship with somebody else's spouse.

Now the verb here in Matthew obviously is imperative--it is a command. But most Bible scholars see it not only as a command not to engage in sexual activity with somebody else's spouse but see it in a general sense because the word is also used in a general way in some other sources. For example in

some places the word means to seduce or violate a woman, that's very general--a married or unmarried woman. Other places it is translated to commit harlotry. So that generally the word has been used to speak of any kind of illicit intercourse at all; and anything is illicit outside the bond of marriage. And so primarily it refers to a sexual relationship that violates a marriage.

But I believe it can...the spirit of it extends farther to include any kind of illicit sexual behavior. And I think the wideness of it is indicated in what our Lord says in verse 28 where He says that anybody who looks on any woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart. And the woman He speaks of here He doesn't say whether she's married or not, it's so broad that anybody who lusts after any woman has committed adultery in his heart. So the Lord is using the term in the broadest possible manner--anybody and any woman.

Now let me tell ya people this is a sin that really way...it really waves the banner today. It's as if we've just completely turned our back on this. Somebody ought to read Proverbs 5, 6 and 7 before they ever engage in this. Proverbs 5, 6 and 7 just speaks so pointedly to the devastation caused by the sin of sexual adultery or fornication. It is a sin for fools. Witness David, and the results. Witness Shechem who defiled Dinah and was later slaughtered. Witness Absalom who defiled others in the sexual sins and vi...wound up being hanged in a tree. It is a sin for fools. The Bible says you take fire into your bosom. Fornicators and adulterers (Hebrews 13:4) God will judge.

The New Testament reiterates with finality and firmness this prohibition. First Corinthians chapter 6 condemns it. Second Peter chapter 2 condemns it. Revelation chapter 2 condemns it. The end of the Book of Revelation says that fornicators and adulterers won't even enter into God's kingdom. It is a serious, heinous, vile crime.

And Jesus is identifying with tha...their view of it, they had a very serious view. In John for example the 8th chapter the Jewish leaders had caught a woman in the act of adultery and "They said to him," in verse 4, "Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act." I don't know what happened to the man, that'll give you a little indication of their double standard. But they dragged this woman out of the very act of adultery. "And Moses, in the law, commanded us that she should be stoned; what do you say?" Boy, they were hard line legalists and they had Moses on their side they felt. Now they had a right to condemn. And Jesus would have had to agree with them and say, stone her, if He didn't have the power to forgive her. But when Jesus looked at her and said, "Go, and sin no more," He washed her as white as the driven snow. And in the whiteness and purity of His gift of salvation to that woman there was no sin for which she should be stoned remaining.

But apart from that they were right. Moses did say, Deuteronomy 22:22, if ya catch 'em doing it, stone 'em. So they were right, they saw the deed just the way God saw it. The law of God was very clear. And people I'm telling you it hasn't changed. Sexual immorality today, in any day, is just as vile, just as heinous, just as evil as it was then. And I don't care if you're engaged, don't care if you're going together, I don't care if you believe you love each other, I don't care whatever it is apart from the bond of monogamous marriage, an act of sexual relationship is a heinous crime. And we need to say it like that in our day because people don't believe that.

So the deed, but Jesus isn't finished with the deed, He wants to talk about the desire in verse 28. This is what He says, "But I say unto you." In other words you went as far as you went but you never went far enough--you stopped with the externals. "I say to you whosoever" anybody "looking on a woman" any woman "to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart."

Now this is a fascinating verse, and there's much I want you to see. The Lord forces the self-righteous to the fact that they're not holy. The Pharisees are saying we don't do that, we don't commit that sin. And Jesus drives them right down into their hearts as if Psalm 66:18 became a reality, "If I regard iniquity in my" what? "heart, the Lord will not hear me." God is always examining the sin of the heart. It is the internal that breaks the relationship. And so it is that Jesus says I am concerned about what's on the inside.

Let's look at the terms. "But I," and it's emphatic, ego is therethe pronoun is there because He is saying, I am the new authority, you have had your authority to the rabbinic tradition. Sometimes it was true to Moses, sometimes it was not. In this case it was true to Moses, but nonetheless He is referring to the rabbinic tradition. You have had that, but I am a new authority. And by the way He said this in such an authoritative way that when He was finished with the sermon they were shocked because He spoke with such authority.

I say that, pas ho, anybody whosoever looketh, present participle, is in the process of continuing to look. Now mark that, it's continuous action, blepn, a continued state. Do you see the idea? It isn't the inadvertent, accidental glance, that's not what our Lord is talking about. It is the purposeful, repeated, lustful looking. It isn't the involuntary glance at all; it is that which is purposeful.

And by the way I'll show you an interesting thing about this verse. Listen to what He says, "Whoever looks on a woman to lust after her." Now listen to this, He doesn't say, commits adultery, no He doesn't say that. Whoever looks on a woman to lust after her commits adultery, no. He says, "Whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery in his heart." Why? Because it is the vile adulterous heart that results in the wanton look, do you see? The sin has already happened in the heart, the adultery is conceived and thus the look is prompted. That's why you may find in this life that someone passes into your gaze involuntary and appears as a temptation from Satan, or maybe even trying to attract attention. And a involuntary glance means you just resist and turn away. But when you latch on and you cultivate and you pursue the desire, it's because your lustful, adulterous heart has been seeking an object, and you fulfill the fantasy that's already there in your heart.

Now notice the word "lust"--it's very helpful to see the Greek here. "Whoever looks on a woman to lust." And it uses a Greek form. For you Greek students, pros to, with the infinitive, and any time you see that it means a purpose, with the purpose of lusting. In other words it isn't an involuntary glance, it is a purposeful one. The heart is filled with adultery, wanting to find an object to which to attach the fantasy. It's when you, you're looking for the woman to lust after, when you, you, you go to the film because you know when you get there you will see what you desire in your heart to see, that which will meet your lust. It's when you go around the dial on the television to find the thing that panders your lust. It's when you seek the object, it's the purpose. So it would read this way, emphatically I say

to you that whoever continues looking on a woman for the purpose of lusting gives evidence of already committing adult-ery in his heart. The continued look is the manifestation of the vile heart. The aorist infinitive here is an accomplished lusting, you've already done it, you've filled it up, this is just the last element. It's already done.

And so what Jesus is saying is this, it's the heart that's the problem. You know some...if ya could just said, who-ever looks on a woman to lust after her is committing adultery, somebody would have said, well you know I, I was just minding my own business, here she came and, and, and she was very attractive and, and so forth and so on and it just kind of happened. That isn't what the Lord's talking about. He saying, if that happens it's because already in your heart is a vile, lusting, adulterous attitude. And so you see it's the heart that is the problem, it's the heart that has to be transformed, that's what He's saying. It's out of the heart proceeds evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications. He is condemning looking at a woman as an object to gratify an adulterous heart.

Let me just add this, temptation to illicit sexual desire or fantasy is not sin. Temptation, Satan may tempt you; Satan may draw something in to tempt you. The sin comes in what you do with it. If you entertain the temptation, if you maintain the temptation, if you pander those evil thoughts, then it becomes the sin. Steyr says, "He who experiences at a first glance this desire, and then instead of turning away and withdrawing from sin continues to look in order to retain and increase the desire commits the sin." It's when it's pandered.

In Second Samuel chapter 11 David is walking on his roof and he looks over and here is Bath-Sheba innocently enough, perhaps never dreaming that she could be seen from the king's porch, perhaps feeling very safe, up there is bathing and David's...instead of turn-ing away and going back to where he should be, continues to look and look and look until his adulterous heart brings forth adultery and lust and it ultimately ended both in the act and the murder of her husband. Somebody has said, sow a thought and reap an act, sow an act and reap a habit, sow a habit and reap a character, sow a char-acter and reap a destiny. And it all starts when you sow a thought.

Now listen, the Bible says, to the pure all things are pure. But to the one whose heart is defiled, he'll defile everything. He'll look at something beautiful and make it something ugly. That's because his heart is defiled. That's why there's pornography people. That's why we have dirty books, dirty magazines, dirty movies, dirty music, dirty television shows, dirty jokes, dirty stories, dirty words. That's why we have all of that kind of stuff, because the heart of man is so evil and man finds things to pander his adulterous heart. Jesus is saying if you've ever done that you know the depths of sin, and you know that only a transformation of the inside can make a difference. Arthur Pink writing years ago said, "By clear and necessary implication Christ here also forbade the using of any other of our senses and members to stir up lust. If lustful looking is so grievous a sin then those who dress and expose themselves with desires to be looked at and lusted after as Jezebel who painted her face, tried her head and looked out of the window are not less but perhaps more guilty. In this matter it is not only too often the case that men sin but women tempt them so to do, how great then must be the guilt of the great majority of the modern misses who deliberately seek to arouse the sexual passions of our young men. And how much greater still is the guilt of most of their mothers for allowing them to

become lascivious temptresses." It goes both ways. And I think our Lord here is talking about a man lusting after a woman in His illustration but He's assuming that it goes the other way that women also lust after men. Both are wrong, and creating the lust by the way you dress. You know I actually sometimes fear when summer comes because of the impropriety of people in the way they dress, because I don't think it assists the worship of the Lord, and I'm always concerned about that and I hope you're prayerful about it. No wonder Job said in Job 31, "I made a covenant with my eyes." "I made a covenant with my eyes. When...why then should I think upon a maid." You know what his covenant was? Not to look, not to look. And you better make a covenant with your eyes. Job went on to say, "If my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after my eyes, and any blot hath clung to my hands, then let me sow, and let another eat." In other words if I break the covenant with my eyes, let me starve. That's what he's saying. Job recognized that the thought is father to the deed, and that if he allowed his eyes the, the privilege they would pander his adult-erous heart. Psalm 119:37 says, "Turn" and it's a prayer to the Lord, "Turn my eyes away from beholding vanity."
And so what our Lord is saying is the, the heart has to be dealt with, cause the heart is the issue--that's the thrust of it. Now beloved if you're, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ you have a new heart, but oh the flesh, the sinfulness that's still there raises it's ugly head, doesn't it? Satan comes to tempt. I hope you've made a covenant with your eyes, you who have the resource for victory. But Jesus is saying to these Pharisees, your problem is too deep for your self-righteousness to handle. Then He goes a step further, and this is the final point, we'll hurry to a conclusion. And that is the deliverance. How you do get out of this situation? From the deed, to the desire, to the deliverance. Look at this, this is really fascinating. "If your right eye offend you, pluck it out, and cast it from you; for it's profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, not the whole body should be cast into hell. If thy right hand offend thee, cut if off, and cast it from thee; for it's profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."
Now when you first read that you say, well that's absolutely incongruous. If He's saying the issue is the heart, what's He sayin' pluck out the eye for? Don't blind people lust? You better believe it. If you plucked out your right eye and had a lustful heart your left eye'd go wild makin' up time for your lost right eye. If you got rid of your right hand and you had a, an adulterous heart your left hand would be busier than the other two tryin' to make up for it. The point is, Jesus is not saying that there is a physical remedy for a heart problem; that would undermine the whole point.
This is what He is saying, to a, to a Jew the right eye and the right arm andthe right leg were symbols of the best facility that a man had, the right was always symbolic of the better of the two. And He is simply saying, there is nothing too precious to eliminate from your life if it's gonna cause your heart to be pandered in its adulterous desires, that's what He saying. If it means getting rid of your most precious possession then get rid of it, even if it's your right eye or your right arm.
Matthew chapter 18 verse 7, "Woe unto the world because of offenses! It must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offenses come! If thy hand offend thee, cut if off, cast it from thee; it's better for thee to enter into life lame and maimed, than having two hands, to be cast into everlasting fire. If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, cast it from thee; it's better to enter into

life with one eye, rather than, two eyes, and be cast into hell fire." All he's really saying is that anything that causes a man to remain in his sin and to pander the adulterous heart and the evil heart should be eliminated if it is the most precious thing you have. People come along and say well I'm leaving my wife. Why? Well, because I've found another woman, we're in love oh, she means everything to me. Dump her! Get rid of her. You're pandering your lust, condemning your soul.
What our Lord is saying is that nothing is precious if it affects your eternal destiny. Sin must be dealt with radically. Paul says, "I beat my body to bring it into subjection." And so Jesus calls for immediate action. He diagnoses the problem and says, pluck it out, cut it off, eliminate it, whatever it is in your life, whatever it is. Whatever it is that feeds that heart of lust, whatever it is that feeds that adulterous thought, get rid of it. If you go to a theater and you watch something that does that, don't go, get rid of it. If you have that problem with your television, get rid of it. if you read things like that get rid of 'em. If you've got magazine lying around with pictures like that, throw em in the trash, burn 'em, get rid of 'em.
He is not really talking about the physical, we know that. He knows that cutting off your right hand isn't going to change an adulterous heart. Plucking out your right eye isn't going to change an adulterous heart. But what He is saying is take the most precious thing you have, your right arm, your right eye if need be, and get rid of it if it stands in the way and if it brings you to sin.
Some people misunderstood this. There were men who wished to free themselves from the problem of lust and so they, they did strange things to their bodies. I told you about Abelard and Origen who decided that they ought to castrate themselves so they wouldn't have these problems. That didn't eliminate the problems; it only eliminated their responses to the problems, the problems were still there.
Some of them used to go into the Egyptian desert and they'd decide they'd live all alone and they'd think about nothing but God. The most famous man to do that was a man named Saint Anthony. He decided he'd go out to get rid of this...the feelings of...da ah...lust that he had in his heart, he'd go to ah, to the desert in Egypt. He lived like a hermit, he fasted, he would go days and days and days keeping himself awake to punish himself, as a righteous act. He would torture his body. Listen for 35 years Saint Anthony lived in the desert. For 35 years he said he had a non stop battle with temptation. And this is what he wrote in his biography: first of all the devil tried to lead him away from discipline whispering to him to the remembrance of wealth, cares for his sister, claims of kindred, love of money, love of glory, various pleasures of the table, other relaxations of life, and last of all Satan tempted me in the area of virtue. He said in the battle Satan would tempt him with foul thoughts that he would counter with prayers. Satan would tempt him with lust and he counter with, with more prayers and faith and fasting. He said the devil one night took on him the shape of a woman, and the devil imitated all the acts that a woman could do to beguile Saint Anthony. And he said for 35 years I went through that. And the point of the story folks is this: you can be all alone in the Egyptian desert and not have anything goin' on in your heart to change the problem. The plain fact is if, if Anthony had really taken the resources available from God to have a changed heart he wouldn't have needed to leave town.

Notice the word "offend" just briefly. Verse 29, "offend," verse 30, "offend"--skandalon in the Greek. It's used of a trap, in fact literally a bait stick in a trap. In a trap they'd stick a bait stick, the animal would come and grab the bait on the bait stick, and the trap would close. He says, if your right eye is the bait stick that catches you in the trap where your adulterous lust is fulfilled, then pluck it out. If your right hand is the trap then cut it off. Whatever it is in your life that causes these vile, evil thoughts get rid of them.

Now there's a, a kind of a subtlety in this whole thing. Let me ask you this, could these scribes and Pharisees get rid of these problems, could they? The fact of the matter is they couldn't. Jesus again is giving them an impossible standard--a frustration that's gonna make them say, we tried and we can't. The Lord has said, boy you're better off to have no eye and no arm than to go into hell, you ought to say with the lizard, better my tail than my life. And they're gonna say, but we can't, we, we can't, we don't know how to get this deliverance. And so they're going to come to the desperation of saying, we must have somebody do it for us, we must have a new heart and a new life, and that is precisely what the Lord offers. A heart in every thought renewed and filled with love divine, perfect and right and pure and good, a copy Lord of Thine. And so the Lord forces them to see that they need a new nature.

Beloved, if Jesus Christ has come into your life you have that new nature, you have that new heart. And you don't need to follow the pandering of your own lust; you can know victory over that. I thank God for that. You can make as Job did a covenant with your eyes. As Colossians 3 says, "You can kill the members of your body in this world." You can know victory. But a man without Jesus Christ and a woman without Jesus Christ is a constant victim of this. Oh how grateful we should be that what the Lord has given us is a resource for victory. I thank God that He's given me a new heart. He's given you who know Him a new heart, so that we don't need to have a constant losing battle. We never need to lose if we appropriate the resources that are there.

I want to close by reading you this, I just thought it was so powerful, listen to it. "In the early part of the American War a young woman of 22 years died at the Commercial Hospital in Cincinnati in the dead of winter. She had once possessed the envi...enviable share of beauty that young woman have, she'd been greatly sought after for her charms, her face was a delight, but she had become a prostitute. Highly educated and accomplished in manners she had spent her young life in shame and she died friendless as a broken hearted outcast of society. Among her personal effects was found in manuscript the poem called, Beautiful Snow. The poem was written by the girl before she died to describe her life. It was taken to the editor of the National Union and appeared in print the morning after her death. When the poem appeared in the paper the girl's body had not been buried and the American poet Thomas Buchanan Reed was so impressed by the stirring pathos of the poem that he followed the corpse to its final resting place."

Now the poem is very long but this is part of what it said, "Oh, the snow, the beautiful snow filling the sky and the earth below, over the house tops, over the street, over the heads of the people you meet, dancing, flirting, skimming along beautiful snow it can do no wrong. Flying to kiss a fair lady's cheek, clinging to lips in frolicsome freak, beautiful snow from the heavens above, pure as an angel and

gentle as love. Once I was pure as the snow but I fell, fell like the snowflakes from heaven to hell, fell to be trampled as filth in the street, fell to be scoffed to be spat on and beat. Pleading and cursing and dreading to die, selling my soul to whoever would buy. Dealing in shame for a morsel of bread, hating the living and fearing the dead. Merciful God have I fallen so low, and yet I was once like the beautiful snow. Once I was fair as the beautiful snow, with an eye like its crystal and a heart like its glow. Once I wasloved for my innocent grace, flattered and sought for the charms of my face, father, mother, sister and all, God and myself I have lost by my fall. The various wretch that goes shivering by will make a wide scoop lest I wander too nigh. For all that is on or above me I know there's nothing as pure as the beautiful snow. How strange it should be that this beautiful snow should fall on a sinner with nowhere to go. How strange it should be when night comes again if the snowand the ice struck my desperate brain. Fainting, freezing, dying alone too wicked for prayer, too weak for a moan to be heard in the streets of the crazy town, gone mad in the joy of the snow coming down, to lie and to die in my terrible woe with a bed and a shroud of the beautiful snow." Sometime later this verse was added by another pen, "Helpless and frail as the trampled snow, sinner despair not Christ stoopeth low to rescue the soul that is lost in its sin and raise it to life and enjoyment again. Groaning, bleeding, dying for thee the crucified hung, made a curse on the tree. His accents of mercy fall soft on thine ear, is there mercy for me, will He heed my prayer? Oh God, in the stream that for sinners doth flow, wash me and I shall be whiter than snow." Let's pray.

Father, we thank You that You've given us a new heart, that we don't need to count on our own righteousness but that we can trust in You. We can't remedy our hearts Father, but You can. Thank You for that new heart. And oh Lord help us not to let the flesh think its adulterous thoughts, seek its adulterous ends. Help us to be pure in action, in the deed, pure in thought in the desire. Help us to take whatever strides necessary to pluck out, cut off, cast away, whatever it is that might damn the soul to hell. Or in the case of a believer, might bring us into chastening and judgment. God make us pure, whiter than snow. Keep our thoughts, guard our eyes, and may our heart's be filled with thoughts of Thee, for Your praise we ask it.

Available online at: http://www.gty.org
COPYRIGHT (C) 2014 Grace to You
You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright).