

MARRIAGE IS FOREVER

MATTHEW 5:27-32

INTRODUCTION

Perfect purity is to characterize the new man in Christ. Every thought that tends to disrupt the sacred relationship of husband and wife, the foundation of the family is to be banished. There is no sin that so distroys the moral character of the person as the sin of sex.

V.27- Jesus beings by saying, "Ye have heard that it is said by them of old times." Verse 27. The scarlet sin was strictly forbidden in the Old Testament.

This is the 7th commandment - Exodus 20:14. This was an act of impurity and personal purity is at stake. Now what Jesus is about to point out is who or what will control a man is as important as the law concerning anger and murder, the commandment we considered last week.

In a magazine it says, "Wherever you go, you find people speaking of the new morality, the new freedom, the sexual revolution."

They all add up to the same thing. Permissiveness of anything goes!

This is true in all social levels. In conduct, in manners, in dress, and sexual relationships.

We are living in a sex obsessed society. We see pornography on the newstands. It is the theme of the motion pictures and the modern novels. The use of sex appeals in advertising. It is impossible to open a magazine, watch television, see the billboards on the highways without being reminded of the fact of sex.

Verse 28 - Now I say what did Jesus say? "Whosoever looketh on a woman." Now the doctrine of sin is not very popular today since so many people desire to live as animals, but Jesus is going to give a grasp of truth in the New Testament. "Thy shalt not commit adultery." He says sin is not merely a matter of actions and of deeds. It is something within the heart that leads to the action.

Jesus says there is a disease in your heart. There is something that is foul. Now man has not always been like that, because God made him perfect, but sin has entered in highly respectable men and women who would never dream of committing an act of adultery, but with their minds they enjoy sinning in the imagination. If you don't believe it, you check on the kinds of novels some people read, the kind of literature. They enjoy it. Now you would not dream of doing these things yourself, but you are doing them by proxy. You are sinning in your heart and mind and in your imagination by reading novels, biographies and reviews of books.

There are other people who try to explain away their failure by saying, "I was born like that." Look at that other man. He isn't like that. Well, you don't know the other man's case. The great trouble, Jesus said, is in the heart. And so he gave the exact quote of the 7th commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." As you will recall the first four commandments had to do with the relationship to God. The last six commandments deal with the relationship of people with each other to accomplish the purpose as the people of God as a good society. Not to kill, not to steal, not to lie, not to commit adultery.

Jesus went beyond the 7th commandment to the matter of lust. I do not believe that Jesus was speaking of natural, normal attractiveness men and women have for each other. I don't think that this prohibits men and women from recognizing and appreciating the attractiveness of each other's persons or personality.

But the phrase, "looking at a woman to lust after her" means to look with a view to an improper relationship. Lusting means to ponder an adulterous relationship, to dwell on it in the mind and to let your imagination run wild.

Jesus exposition of this problem was no less drastic than his approach to murder. You remember last week, we talked about, he said if you were angry.

This means at least two things, first - the cause of the scarlet sin originates within the man, not outside him. He has no right to blame another. His own mind should be made up concerning such temptation.

*Billy Sunday - man if you tell me where can you get his wife all your boys - "you want the 1st man who went to hell worrying about another man's wife"*

Second, if a man is emotionally untrue to his wife, he is potentially untrue to her.

Suppress the former and you will kill the latter that will be born in his heart.

Now this does not mean that it is just as bad to think about the scarlet sin as it is to practice it. Actually the desires with which God endows us at creation are sacred. They have a sublime place.

A drive-in theater advertises its evening movie with the words "It's sexsational." For normal people, sex does not have to be promoted or stimulated. For them it needs to be restrained and controlled until it can be expressed according to God-given time and circumstances.

Movies, television, radio, literature which remind of sex, are sowing seeds of adultery in the minds that otherwise might find freedom in purity.

The conservative Mohammedans compel their women and girls over 12 to wear veils and cover their limbs to the ankles and elbows, lest a man be tempted. A man without high ideals is like an automobile without a steering wheel.

What is it that leads to adultery? The way we dress, the movies, the present attitudes which encourage it.

The Bible has a great deal to say on this critical issue and this problem which is facing American society. Because of the current misuse of sex and the new morality we find a deterioration of family life.

As I have stated, man by nature is a sexual being. In the animal kingdom, the full expression is limited to times and in mating seasons. But in man, it is regarded as pure and a matter of impulse to choose the time and the extent of his love-making.

There are those who say sex should be purely a private matter. How can it be when it involves at least two persons, and often three or four? In the United States, more than 250,000 babies are born to unwed mothers each year. And about one out of five brides is pregnant at her wedding. Pornography is reportedly a half-million dollar business. And sex is the hidden persuader in the advertisements. They have discovered that they can sell things through sex. They sell everything.

The sad thing is that it robs us of the human side. It takes away the real purpose and it becomes mechanical. It is sad that many of our magazines with uncovered flesh of lovely young women is a doctrine that debases women and degenerates love. Women are regarded as toys for men. Sex is not for them an expression of tender sharing of love or for the propagation of the race. I think it's a real insult.

The people of Canaan practiced sexual intercourse at the shrine. It was part of the ritual and this was what the preacher Amos, a stern country preacher, condemned those who went in to the same maid who laid herself down at every altar. He saw this as a denial of the truth and an insult to God.

Now Jesus is going to tell us how to control this.

V.29 Verst 29 - Jesus said, "If your right eye be an offender, pluck it out." Here is the emphasis on self-control and he taught that impurity was terrible thing. The eye, perhaps may rule here and he said it is better for that eye to be plucked out than for a man to suffer in hell his whole body.

Now some of the laws - that should a man commit adultery, in years past, had terrible penalties. In Deut. 22:24 a man might be dealt with.

The important thing about the eye here is to just make a brief trace of this through the Bible.

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food and was a delight to the eye, what happened?

When Lot saw the plain of Sodom, the eye was the offender and lead him to make the choice.

When David glances across the wall and sees a beautiful woman, the great sin of his life followed. 2 Samuel 11:2.

The Psalmist asked that his eyes may be turned away from the holding vanity.

Job made a covenant with his eyes.

The wise man Solomon tells us not to look upon the wine when it is red.

Therefore the first step is to detect right and wrong, not in the act but in the thought, in the intention. If sin is arrested there in the early stages, before it is exercise, the enemy is defeated before he can produce the downfall of the individual.

Dr. Meyer once said a Christian lady was very anxious that he read a certain novel which had just come out and was attracting wide interest. She assured him that he would find much that he would approve of and would enjoy. "So acting on her advise," he said, "I took the book to use up some leisure hours on the ship on crossing the Atlantic Ocean." One afternoon on the deck, he took the book to enjoy it, "However," he said, "when I reached page 50, I flung it over into the ocean, as I thought it;s contents would injury the fish less than myself. If I had continued to read that story, I would have been playing with fire."

And of course it was that his inner senses were more sensative than that Christian woman, and he was able to discern the evil of the book. Some people are quicker than others.

It is like the Coast Guardsman who is accustomed to surveying the ocean. He can detect a tiny boat which would escape the notice of the average person. Jesus is talking about discrimination. Let a man begin by guarding his looks and in the end he will keep his heart.

Joseph overcame his passions by reason in Genesis 39:7-20. Jesus forbade a man's looking on a woman lust in his heart, saying that this could condemn a man to hell. Now careful review of this scripture will say that he was not talking just about an impulse, but he was talking about a permanent attitude that a man has toward a woman, if he considers her as no more than a vehicle for his own gratification and this ought to be taken seriously.

We need to keep in mind that Jesus is trying to preserve the human family. The basic unity in society and anything that tends to disrupt the family is going against the principals of the kingdom man. There is no sin that will so distroy the character of society as the sin against the moral character and the sin against the sexes.

In Russia, the Bolshevists were going to have free love in Russia one time and they found that it just didn't work. Now werthinking about character in the person and purity in a person.

1.30 Verse 30 - "Right hand". Now the eye is to be plucked out and the hand is to be cut off. So here are some drastic measures that should be taken to prevent the diaster. Now to make this very practical, these improper desires. Jesus perhaps today would say you

ought to quit that job, you ought to break off friendship with that group or that friend, or you ought to cut off your relationship with that club if you are going to be thrown in constant contact with that person who has improper desires. The current sexual freedoms in no way contribute to a sense of aliveness or a richness of experience, or happiness in these days in which we live.

The idea is that we must guard against the first thought of evil.

We must avoid the occasions of temptations or this will put us in spiritual danger and when you give up something for Christ's sake you receive a hundred fold.

The punishment for adultery is heavy. Deut. 22:34. It is said that the mental, emotional pattern are transmitted to 3rd and 4th generations, that unborn children will suffer from our failure to conquer this sin plus it may wreck the home, and it may cripple you inwardly.

Therefore you need to cultivate the opposite grace of vanity and find the great enjoyment in Jesus Christ. Truly, any child can understand the words of what is being said here. And he is saying this as a cure for sin. That is your hand offend then you chop it off. Does that mean that if my tongue give me trouble with slander and criticism and profane swearing that the remedy is to take it out.?

A talkative old lady told the new preacher that her one objection to him was that his coat was too long and she would like to cut off about a foot of it. Now whether or not his answer was wise, I do not know, but he suggested that her tongue was too long and that he would like to cut off a little bit of that.

Jesus is trying to get at the inside of a man. If this right hand is constantly doing wrong, then Jesus is instructing that we seek to do something about it. We seek to cut off these evil tendencies that give us trouble.

The real answer is never feed the flesh, make no provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof. There may be a fire burning but Paul tells us never to bring any oil near it, to try to put the fire out.

Another way to do this is to avoid foolish talking and insinuating things along that line would be a problem.

Another thing, you might think about the company you keep. The kind of people you

associate with, will probably influence the way you think about this.

You might also deliberately resist the flesh. Every suggestion of evil, watch and pray, I think the Bible would say. Anything that is going to trap you or cause you to stumble, Jesus is urging you to get rid of it. This is how you should deal with your sins.

Jesus reminds you that the awful nature of sins and the consequences of it. There is no doubt that the consequences should be fixed in mind and that you should think about the destiny of your soul. The soul is more important than the eye or the lust of the flesh. This means that whatever comes between you and your soul that is harmful must be hated and put to one side. It means that your salvation is a most important thing that you have to deal with.

It means that the most important that you are involved in is preparing yourself for eternity. There is no question at all about that. We must hate this sin and destroy it at all cost and we must realize that the idea is to have a pure heart and a clean heart.

V.31 Most important thing that Jesus is saying in Verse 29 and 31 about plucking out and cutting off is that you put to death the matter of sin, that you literally do away with this, that causes you to sin. Keep your body under subjection. I Cor. 9:27. You must never feed the flesh. Never read these things that will be harmful to the mind. These novels that go to a great deal of temptation and put ideas in your mind. Now this is not something to make you morbid because true holiness is always concerned about pleasing God. We must deliberately restrain the flesh. Every suggestion.

Verse 31 - "Custom says". Now there was a practice whereby they could give a release to some person and grant a divorce. That was the situation. If a man was tired of his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement and send her away.

Now the same thing in some countries where a man can have 4 or 5 wives he also can get rid of her in the same way. Now marriage in the home stood in great peril, at the time when Jesus came into this world. Now it seems that the world has come again to just such a time. Year after year, one out of about every four marriages in America ends in divorce. The divorce rate is high.

Perhaps there is no teaching of Jesus that we need to study with more care than what he had to say of marriage and divorce.

Among the Jews, perhaps there was no nation in theory that had a higher ideal of marriage that the Jews had. The prophet Malachi revealed the heart of God when he stated for the Lord., the God of Israel said that he hated putting away divorce. Chapter 2:16. There were some of the rabbis who thought that the very altar sheds tears when a man divorces the wife of his youth.

Of course the Jewish practice fell short of the ideal. Deut. 24:1. Divorce was common. When a man had taken a wife and married her and it comes to pass that she find no favor in his sight because he found some uncleanness in her, let him write her a bill of divorcement and send her out of his house. The process of divorcement was very simple. It simply said, "Let this be, from me, a writ of divorce and letter of dismissal and deed of liberation that thou mayst marry whatsoever man thou wilt." All that had to be done was to hand the document to the woman in the presence of two witnesses and she stood divorced.

The thought of the word (unclean) could refer to unchastity or it could mean that she spoiled his dinner by putting too much salt in his food or that she went out into the public with her head uncovered or that she talked to a man on the street or if she were quarrelsome.

Now of course there are some who looked upon the woman as one who would be the guardian of the household affairs.

In 1867, the first year we have reliable figures on divorce, 9,937 persons obtained divorces in the United States. This was 0.3 per 1000 population. Now divorces in America reached its highest rate in any country in what we call the West in which there was 4.3 per 1000 population. And of course these are gotten on the grounds of cruelty, incompatibility, or all sorts of loopholes out of marriage.

132 Verse 32 - Now Jesus had a word that he said "Except for fornication and adultery" which mean in the Bible about the same thing, they are the only circumstances by which a person could rightfully be divorced. Jesus permitted divorce for one cause - unfaithfulness, moral infidelity. The door is left open so as not to make it necessary to live indefinitely with a moral reprobate. The one ground is immorality. Now this doesn't include mental

cruelty and some of the violations which are used today.

The religious leaders were asking Jesus if it was right for a man to divorce his wife? No doubt there may be some incompatible. Living with some people may be unbearable but this is a more general question in their minds. These people really wanted to destroy Jesus by simply getting him to say some contradiction against the law or to cause him to condemn Herod, the king, who was a divorced man living with his brother's wife.

You remember John, the Baptist had already been beheaded for speaking out against Herod.

Now what Jesus was defending here was "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." Here was obedience to the will of God. Marriage was not a matter of temporary convenience or pleasure but was in God's eternal purpose. Now this must not be severed. Once that it has the evidence of being joined together of God.

Now there is wisdom in the idea of one man and one woman. This is the way that life works best. Personal experience shows us that to share the family harvest of the years, children, grandchildren, mother, father must stay together.

I think there are few sadder things than the sight of an elderly couple who have deprived themselves of the affection and delight of their children by their infidelity. Sometimes there are 2nd and 3rd wife or husband who has to be introduced at a graduation or wedding ceremony and always it is like a cold wind blowing when there should be sweetness. The family are divided up on holidays and the children go one way.

The divorce person often becomes very lonely. Thus the purpose of marriage is destroyed.

God saw that it was not good for man to be alone so he made woman and divorce destroys God's creation. If man puts away his wife, then he faces a long trail of lonely years.

For no one can really take her place. At last he looks back on the golden days, and he is depressed.

When the home is broken, you say it is too late for me. Broken by divorce. What am I to do? I think the gospel begins here, because Jesus is concerned with every human

predicament and especially with our brokenness and he offered us really no legal slide rule or code and I don't think he locked divorced people out of the kingdom of God. He did not say that. The divorced person is unforgiveable, he did not say that. The gospel says it is never too late to start life over with him, or to start your home over with him. When we see the whole attitude of Jesus, we see the gospel, the good news, of a new beginning!

But this is to concentrate on the problem of looseness of sex and quite often young people enter into marriage without the thought of it lasting, just trial and error. Sometimes they may not even have a job of support. Why do marriages fail? How can we curb divorce? What elements go into the making of a lasting marriage? The woman being interviewed on her 50th wedding anniversary, the reporter asked, "During all these married years, did you ever consider divorce?" The old woman answered, "I considered murder a few times, but never divorce." It takes a lifelong adjustment, the grace of God, and Christians can make marriage work.