

THE PROBLEM OF LUST AND ITS SOLUTION

(MATTHEW 5.27-30)

Summary: Jesus teaches that lust is really what lies behind adultery. For those in the kingdom not only is adultery prohibited but even lusting after others is wrong. The right response to lust is to do everything in one's power to eliminate it. True marital faithfulness is internal not merely external. Jesus intensifies the Christian sexual ethic.

I. Exegetical Outline

1. The Law (v27)
2. The Heart of the Law (v28)
3. The Application of the Law (v29-30)

II. The Law (v27)

Jesus again quotes from the Mosaic Law, specifically the seventh of the ten commandments, the prohibition to commit adultery. Remember these authoritative interpretations of the Law are relational in context. Adultery is not only wrong before God (Gen. 39.7-9), but it brings destruction and pain to those who engage in it and those in the community (Prov. 6.27-35; 7.1-27). The implied meaning when Jesus quotes this is that God is only concerned about the physical act of adultery (like murder previously). Jesus seeks to correct this misunderstanding.

III. The Heart of the Law (v28)

Jesus reveals the natural extension of the command to not commit adultery. If a man lusts after a woman, he has already committed adultery with her in the heart. A few questions emerge from what Jesus says. First, is Jesus speaking about men only lusting after women? Or are women in view here as well? Secondly, is Jesus speaking about people who are married or are single men and women included in this as well? Another question is what constitutes

lust? Scholars are split on these questions, specifically who Jesus has in mind here. Some see only married men lusting after married women while others see this more comprehensively to refer to men and women initiating the lusting after married or single men and women. The bottom line is that infidelity begins in the heart and unchecked lust can lead to adultery. Spiritual adultery paves the road to physical adultery.

It is critical to point out that the focus of Jesus' instruction here is *not* sexual attraction but lust. When a man or woman see the opposite sex and feel attraction to them this is a good natural desire that God has built into them. The issue is when that general attraction transforms into lust. Lust is not godly nor good. I believe the episode of Amnon and Tamar is an illustration of what lust is (II Sam. 13.1-17)

IV. The Application of the Law (29-30)

Jesus provides a graphic vivid metaphor to remedy the presence of lust in one's life. A picture of an unseen/seen reality. The overall force of these verses communicate that radical action must be taken to eliminate lust (Col. 3.5-6). The eye and hand represent the body and the connection between the spiritual and physical. Notice that the eye comes first then the hand. Lust begins with what we see and whatever we look at the body follows. The consequence of letting lust have a free reign in your life is hell. A life consumed by and characterized by immorality cannot enter the kingdom of heaven (I Cor. 6.9).

V. Review

1. God is not just concerned with purity of body but more so purity of heart.
2. Radical action must be taken in one's life to remove the trap of lust. Everything is on the table.
3. Unrepentant lust leads to hell
4. Jesus has in focus lust not sexual attraction.