

Dealing with the Spirit of Immorality (Matt 5:27-30)



1. This Is a Hot Topic: We are Living in a Time of Sexual Revolution.

- a. The Sermon on the Mount is Christian Discipleship Manual 101. Jesus is not angry, nor is He raising the standard to an impossible height to condemn us. This is not an 'angry holiness preaching' to make us squirm or feel ashamed. Jesus is very tender. He is trying to help us to experience a life of freedom: 'It is more profitable for you...(x2).' (Matt 5:29-30)

While this is not comprehensive teaching on sexual purity, Jesus exposes:

- i. how the spirit of immorality works.
- ii. how destructive it is.
- iii. how to break free of its corrupting power.
- iv. how to maintain purity in our hearts in a perverse generation.

This subject is a stumbling block to many in committing to Christian discipleship. Yet the purity of our hearts affects the way we see God and experience God. 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' (Matt 5:8)

- b. Jesus' commentary on the 7th Commandment: 'You shall not commit adultery.' (Ex 20:14; Deut 5:18)

There were 2 problems in the Pharisaic interpretation (oral tradition):

- i. *The culture of the day put undue blame on women.* E.g. John 8:4 - Where is the man caught in the act of adultery? On the contrary, Jesus puts primary responsibility on men.
- ii. *They reduced the meaning of the 7th commandment to 'external' & 'physical act' of adultery only, which misses the original intention of the law.*

Jesus rightly applies the 7th commandment to include all forms of immorality at the heart level. It means the 7th commandment is about sexual purity at the heart level.

2. Defining 'Godly Sexuality'

- a. At creation, God created human beings in two genders, male and female. We are all sexual beings by God's design. It is an integral part of our identity, and it is holy. And God put *all human sexual expression* within the covenant relationship of marriage. God knows that the only place where sexual activity enriches our life is within a covenantal relationship with our spouse in all of our life story - our joy, pain, goals, family, success, failure, etc. Therefore the marriage vow says *'...in riches, in poverty, in health, in sickness, until death do us part...'*

All sexual activities will end up in injured hearts and confusion outside this life-long commitment in a covenant relationship that provides the full support system for spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical union.

- b. The godly standard for holy sexuality: 'Abstinence before marriage, and full focus of passion on one person in marriage.' Adultery breaks the marriage covenant, and therefore is a much more serious offense before God than other types of immorality. What is 'immorality'? 'Immorality includes all sexual activity (physical, verbal, technological) outside of a covenant of marriage between one man and one woman.' All forms of immorality deeply injure our hearts, defile our spirits, devalue us, and hurt our relationship with God. All premarital sex must be repented of.

3. Principle 1: Watch the 'Eye Gate'

- a. [1] It starts from the eye gate → [2] to the heart (imagination/fantasies) → [3] to the physical act

Jesus calls stage [2] sin in our hearts! *'It is not my fault if a bird flies over my head, but it is all my fault if I allow a bird to nest on my head.'* (Martin Luther) The key to winning this war with the spirit of immorality is taking control of the 'eye gate.' This is a must-have 'high ground' in this war. E.g. David & Bathsheba. (C.f. 'despising the Lord', 2 Sam 12:10). *'Would you rather fight with the Hulk or Dr Bruce Banner?'*

- b. [1] Job: 'I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman?' (Job 31:1).
 [2] David: 'I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set nothing wicked before my eyes...' (Ps 101:2-3) Our 'house' is where we are most relaxed and unguarded. Ps 101 is David's heartfelt prayer for purity and righteous life before God. David learned the importance of taking control of his eyes. David was far from perfect! But David's repentance and his reach toward purity in his heart pleased God!

4. Principle 2: 'Militant Heart Response' (a soft approach will not get the victory)

- a. Jesus is appealing to our intellect. 'Think about it, which is better? Make a definite choice today!'

[1] 'right eye' is the superior sight that compensates for the weaker left eye.

[2] 'right hand' has superior grip and strength (linked to personal economic power).

'Pluck it out', and 'cut it off' are militant actions. You will be far better off paying this price now than paying the cumulative price of the damage done by tolerating the spirit of immorality in your life. If your eye (TV, internet) causes you to sin, take it out! If your job (nightclub) causes you to sin, get another job! Choose temporal monetary loss and inconvenience over eternal spiritual loss.

Only do NOT literally cut off your arms or pluck out your eyes. E.g. Origen of the third-century church who was 'the king of allegory', took this verse literally and castrated himself. A bitter irony! Although he might be chuckling in heaven now.

- b. The spirit of immorality is the only subject Jesus warned us about with 'hell fire'. This was not popular then, and it is definitely not popular today! Was it a scare tactic? An empty threat? Jesus understood the danger of hellfire better than anybody. This must serve as a sober warning against all unrepentant continuing indulgence in the 'spirit of immorality.' It leads to a defiled spirit and hardened heart.

The fear of hellfire is NOT the highest form of motivation. But it could be the beginning of the wisdom (Prov 9:10). [Prov 5-7 as underlying thought? Prov 7:21-27]

5. Danger of Immorality

- a. It is very deceptive: 'Don't dance with the devil. He will make a fool out of you.' (Phil Driscoll)

- 'Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves...nor drunkards...will inherit the kingdom of God.' (1 Cor 6:9-10)
- 'This you know, that no fornicator...has any inheritance in the kingdom...Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes...' (Eph 5:5-6)
- 'The sexually immoral...shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire.' (Rev 21:8)
- 'Enter...into the city [New Jerusalem]. But outside are...sexually immoral...' (Rev 22:14-15)

- b. Sexual sin touches the deepest part of our spiritual identity.

- 'Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.' (1 Cor 6:18);
- 'Do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For 'the two,' He says, 'shall become one flesh.' But He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.' (1 Cor 6:16-17) – Note κολλάω – 'glue together.'

- c. It continues to 'grow' and 'mutate' like cancer (Rom 1:24-28). Guilt and shame are only the beginning. 'God gave them up' (x 3) to passions that never satisfy!

- Stage 1 - 'unclean lusts';
- Stage 2 - 'vile passions' (homosexual activity);
- Stage 3 - depraved mind (counterfeit/rejected); 'confused identity', 'killing of unborn justified', etc.
- Stage 4 - Total rejection & destruction of society. [Rome in Paul's day // Western culture today]

- d. It invokes God's judgment, both in time & in eternity.

- Ultimate judgment (1 Cor 6:9-10; Eph 5:5-6; Rev 21:8; Rev 22:14-15)
- Judgment in time: *'To the church in Thyatira, write...'You allow...Jezebel...to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality...I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent...I will kill her children with death...' (Rev 2:18-23 c.f. 2:12-16 c.f. 1 Cor 11:30-32)*

'The Lord is the avenger of all such [acts of unclean lusts]...' (1 Thess 4:4-8)

It is the mercy and kindness of God to warn us, for we reap what we sow (Gal 6:7-8).

6. Principle 3: Practice the Presence of God!

- a. *'I have set the Lord always before me.'* (Ps 16:8 C.f. Acts 2:25 – Messianic Psalm of Jesus)
- b. Fill your mind with the right meditation from the Word of God. (James 1:21; Phil 4:8-9; 2 Sam 11:1)
'Lay aside all filthiness...and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save [heal] your souls.' (James 1:21) *'Forgiveness is instant, but deliverance is often a process.'*
- c. The purity of our heart (in sexuality, marriage, and words) is our ultimate gift to the Lord on that day! Why not make the purity vow again? One must go – the pure spirit or the unclean spirit.
- d. Why such an intense onslaught in our generation? We have an unparalleled bombardment from the spirit of immorality like never before, fuelled by technology. Because we are a generation called to 'see' and 'soar' into the spirit realm. The devil wants to shut down our spiritual vision. But the Lord calls us to 'buy' from Him 'eye salve' that we may see (Rev 3:18). *Let us fight the good fight of faith!*

7. Reflections

1. How was Jesus' interpretation of the 7th Commandment different from that of the Pharisees?
2. How does the spirit of immorality work in a believer's life? Why is it so dangerous to tolerate this spirit?
3. How would you define godly sexuality? Why is sexual purity so important in following Jesus?
4. What are the key(s) to walking in purity that we can learn from Jesus and the saints of God?