

- **\*Matthew 5:27-30\*** In the most famous sermon ever preached to mankind, Jesus of Nazareth presents some very important, simple, but yet difficult teachings to the multitude that have gathered at the foot of the mountain. As the Great Teacher teaches concerning the conduct and character of citizens of His Kingdom that He is coming to establish, He begins to raise the bar for those who are in His midst. Jesus begins a series of difficult teachings where He challenges the current climate of the way many within the Jewish society approached certain subjects.
- One of the first of these many important subjects, of which we read just a few minutes ago, is that of lust. This evening, we will consider the Eyes of Lust and Jesus's teaching concerning lusting for those who we have to right to be longing for.

### **I. DIFFICULTY OF SAYING: Our minds are only known to ourselves and God.**

- A. Unlike other things that we might do...what we think and keep within our minds is not observable to those who are around us. Only myself and God are able to know what is within my mind at any given moment if I don't choose to share that with anyone else.
- B. Because this is the case, Jesus's call for mental purity of any sort, can be easily shrugged off in our minds because after all....no one knows what is going through my mind but me...so who is going to know what things I choose to have going on in my own mind. Therefore, no one can get on to me for the impure thoughts that I choose to let go through my mind.
- C. This creates the difficulty of this saying/teaching of Jesus. If no one knows what I am thinking...then I can get away with any impure thoughts that I might have going through my mind. Because ambiguity and secrecy are great encouragers of sin. However, we must remember that although our thoughts might be secret now...there will come a day where God will bring everything into judgement whether it is open for all to see or whether it is a secret sin. **(Eccl. 12:14)**

### **II. DIFFICULTY FOR US: We live in a highly sexualized society.**

- A. Something else that makes this teaching difficult for us in the 21st century specifically is the highly sexualized society that we live in. We are absolutely surrounded and bombarded on all sides by things of a sexual nature.
- B. Movies, literature, things online, the dress of those around us, the way people speak, the way people behave...few things in our world have been left untouched when it comes to the sexual invasion that is within our society. Because of this invasion, young people in our society are being introduced to this part of life at an earlier and earlier age. Sadly, some young people are not being introduced to it through the proper teaching of their parents, but for many their first experience with anything sexual in nature is with pornography.
  - A. According to covenanters.com...9 out of 10 boys and 6 out of 10 girls are exposed to pornography before the age of 18.
  - B. Even more disturbing is the average age of the first exposure. According to the same studies, the average age of first exposure for young boys is 12 years old. Then even accidental exposure of pornography is experienced by 28% of 16-17 year olds.
- C. I share this with you to simply illustrate just what we are all up against when it comes to our efforts to keep a pure mind. Satan is hard at work, and his work makes this teaching of Jesus all the more difficult for us to achieve.
  - "Never before in the history of telecommunications media in the United States has so much indecent (and obscene) material been so easily accessible by so many minors in so many American homes with so few restrictions." -US Department of Justice

### **III. Jesus calls us to live to a higher standard of purity.**

- A. Even though we live in a society where it is all the more difficult to live with a pure mind, Jesus still demands that we live to a higher standard than the world around us. In the original context, Jesus is demanding that His followers be even better than what was required of the 7th of the 10 commandments. "you have heard it said you shall not commit adultery....but I say that you ought to be even better than that."
- B. We can easily imagine what was going on when it came to this commandment...well I didn't touch...but that doesn't mean that I can't look. I can't actually have this person physically, but I can do whatever I want to do with him or her in my mind. Jesus is saying that we must be better than that.

- C. To live up to the standard that Jesus is setting, we must understand the issue with having eyes of lust. This idea of lust is closely associated with the 10th commandment of coveting. To covet is to see something and strongly desire it to the point where we are willing to do anything, even ungodly things, in order to obtain it. Therefore to lust or covet someone who is not lawfully mine is to desire them and even though I can't have them or have a right to them...I will have them in my mind.
- D. We must understand that there is a difference between the natural attraction of a man to a woman and vice versa and the lusting/coveting that we are considering here. To simply see a woman and think she is attractive is natural, but it is that double take...that taking too long of a look that gets us in trouble.
- E. We would all do well to strive to live up to high standard that Jesus demands of us by seeking to be like Job by not allowing ourselves to look upon any person who is not our spouse with lustful eyes. **(Job 31:1)**

#### **IV. Our actions are a result of what is in our minds.**

- A. "I'm not hurting anyone by fantasizing about them or by watching pornography" will be what is said by the person who doesn't see the problem with looking at others and lusting/coveting after their bodies in their mind. "I can look all I want and think whatever I want, but it will never progress past that."
- B. We must recognize the foolishness in this type of thinking, and we can look to a prominent Biblical character to see the foolishness of thinking that we can continually look and look and think and think and imagine and imagine and it never cause problems. Consider the sad example of David and Bathsheba.
- C. The sin filled situation involving David and Bathsheba didn't start with adultery and murder. It began and evolved from a simply look from David upon Bathsheba as she bathed. **(II Samuel 11:1-3)** At the point where David saw her, he could've done one of two things. He could have simply acknowledged her beauty and went on with his life, or he could do as he did and he lust/coveted her and it lead him to inquire about who she was. I infer that he lusted for her because even after he was told that she was another man's wife...her still pursued her. Something that began in the mind grew and evolved into something that was out of control and disastrous. We must strive for purity because something that begins in the mind will surely evolve into something we wouldn't desire.
- D. What goes on within our minds will have an impact on the reality of our lives.
  - A. Those who habitually look at others and fantasize about them in an inappropriate way or who habitually view pornography find it more and more difficult to see and treat others as something more than just an object that fulfills a desire for them. Science tells us that those who engage in these activities will have problems in their relationships with those closest to them...especially spouses.
  - B. For those who are married...we need to recognize that 68% of divorce cases involve one party finding a new lover through the internet....56% of divorce cases involved one party having an obsessive interest in pornographic websites.
- E. The progression from lust/coveting for another to pornography to adultery/fornication isn't outlandish or unreasonable at all. We must make sure that keep our minds in check so that our actions don't become something they ought not be.

#### **V. Keeping a pure mind demands great yet worthwhile effort.**

- A. Jesus wasn't messing around when he demanded for the citizens of His Kingdom to strive for mental purity. We can infer that He took this very seriously by the measures that He demanded be taken if we find ourselves constantly tempted and giving into lust for someone we have no right to. **(Matt. 5:29,30)** While we might not literally cut off our hands or poke out our eyes...there are things that we can do that can help us be more successful in striving for mental purity. These are necessarily easy things...but they are necessary and worthwhile things.
- B. First thing we can do is to become accountable to someone. We can establish an accountability partner. Remember, mental sin is a secret sin...it is something only I and God know. Therefore, if we want help overcoming, then we need to find someone we trust who can help us stay pure as we ought to be. It's not easy admitting that we have problems, but it is a necessary step towards holiness and being as Jesus would have us to be. **(Gal. 6:2)**
- C. Or it might be that we need to cut off avenues that we find often leading us to thinking things that we ought not. It might be places that we go where people are dressed as they ought not be. If I can avoid that place then I need to avoid that place. Or it could be that I know that certain situations give rise to temptation. If this is the case for me then I need to do what I can to avoid those situations. If I know that having alone time with an electronic device leads to temptation then I need to do what I can to avoid that type of situation. Whatever it is...if I am serious about staying mentally pure, then I will cut off whatever I need to in order to stay true to Jesus's desire for me as a disciple.

D. Giving this type of effort might to seem enjoyable or easy at the moment, but it is so worthwhile because we gain so much by achieving the mental purity that Jesus calls for us to strive for. Firstly, our relationships with others will strive, especially our relationships with our spouses. But most importantly, we will be what Jesus has called us to be and our reward will be heaven with our Lord where the righteous and the holy dwell. Giving the effort might be difficult temporarily, but it will be worth it in the end.

Certainly there is much to consider, even much more than we have discussed this evening when it comes to Jesus's demands that we strive for mental purity. However, my hope is that the little we have covered this evening will help us in our efforts to be what God calls us to be as disciples who meditate on those things that are good and pure and holy. May God help us in our efforts to live up to Jesus's standard for us, and may we glorify Him in our victories and seek His great mercy when we fall short. May God be glorified in all things.