

“The Heart of Sin”

²⁷ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; ²⁸ but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart. ²⁹ And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell." (Matt. 5:27-30)

1. Discuss some of the ways that our culture makes it especially difficult to battle sexual sins. Here are some examples:
 - a. The influence and enticement of television, including ads.
 - b. Pervasive visual stimuli (e.g. billboards, magazines at the grocery store checkout, etc.).
 - c. The internet.
 - d. Others.

Read Matthew 5:27-28

2. Jesus is expanding on the meaning of the 7th commandment:
 - How did the scribes and Pharisees understand this commandment (v 27)? In their minds, what did it mean to violate it?
 - In what way did Jesus expand what it meant to violate this commandment? How might this have also been related to Exodus 20:17?
3. Jesus had already expanded on the meaning of the 6th commandment (v 21-26) and here on the 7th commandment. In both cases, He teaches that the real violation of God's Law takes place in the heart (v 28), that is in the inner person. Discuss the meaning of "the heart".
 - Read Deuteronomy 8:5; Ecclesiastes 8:16; and Luke 9:47. What do these passages say about our hearts?
 - Read Nehemiah 2:2; Proverbs 12:25; 15:13; John 16:6 and 22. What do these passages say about our hearts?
 - Read 2 Chronicles 36:13; Romans 6:17; 1 Corinthians 7:37. What do these passages say about our hearts?
 - Based on the above passages and concepts, what have you learned about the heart? How does this help you understand how sin takes place in the heart?

4. Read Mark 7:21-23.
 - What does Jesus say about our sin in this passage?

 - Upon what do we typically blame our sin (e.g. our outbursts of anger, our anxieties, etc.)?

5. Read Matthew 5:29-30.
 - In what ways do these verses communicate the urgency of taking action against known sin in our lives?

 - Discuss the extremes that Jesus says a person should go to in order to deal with these things.

 - Discuss the types of sins that you may be dealing with. What are practical things you could do to “pluck out your eye” or “cut off your right hand”?

6. On Sunday we discussed the “means of grace” that God has given us for personal growth. I gave the following definition: “Means of grace are the objective instruments, given to the church by God, through which we come to understand and experience our life in Christ.” Discuss this definition and the following examples of “instruments” that God has given us for our growth:
 - The Word (cf. Psalm 119:11).

 - Prayer (cf. Philippians 4:6).

 - Baptism (cf. Romans 6:4).

 - Communion (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:26).

 - Fellowship with other believers (cf. Acts 2:42).

Discuss the following statement:

“Apart from the means of grace God has given you, you can have no reasonable expectation for true change.”