



Sermon on the Mount – Faithfulness and Purity

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²⁷“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

³¹“It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’

³²But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Matthew 5:27-32

Good morning everyone. Well this passage of scripture is pretty intense, but it's also pretty clear. I brought in some tools this morning so let's get this party started Right hands. Eyes. Who's going first? Come on, nobody? Yeah that is probably the first place to start with this passage of scripture, right?

Is Jesus being literal here? No, although some people even some famous church fathers have literally done some of these things. But no, we know that Jesus is not being literal, because even without our hands and our eyes, we can still sin, right? Like James says, sin starts in our minds and in our hearts.

So, what are these two passages really about? Well the topic is adultery, and these are not stand-alone teachings of Jesus. All of these verses in the *Sermon On The Mount*, they fit together, right? They're all part of Jesus' teaching on what *Kingdom-living* looks like. Last week – and then also for the next several weeks – we started looking at these teachings of Jesus that have this formula: “*You have heard it said...but I say to you*”.

And we know that Jesus isn't changing the law, because He told us He wasn't coming to abolish it, but rather to fulfill it. We could say that this is Jesus re-emphasizing the law. He's re-emphasizing the law. Last week, Pastor Adam showed us how Jesus' teaching on murder wasn't just about the law on

murder, right? Nor was it on anger, even though that might be the heart of the law. No, the emphasis is on what the law was pointing to. And it was pointing to Jesus, and Jesus is pointing us to the character of the Father. In Jesus, the law and the fulfillment of the law on murder is reconciliation, right? These passages about adultery are the same.

Jesus starts off in verse 27 by saying, *"You have heard that it was said you shall not commit adultery but I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."*

All right. If this is a *Kingdom-living* lesson, we have to understand that Jesus isn't just emphasizing the law, *adultery*. Nor is He emphasizing the intention of the heart of the law, *lust or sexual immorality*. Jesus is emphasizing the fulfillment of the law which is found in Himself. And in Jesus, in Christ, the fulfillment of the law on adultery is *faithfulness and purity*.

Jesus said that anyone who looks at someone lustfully has already committed adultery in their heart. The fulfillment in Christ isn't focused on adultery, nor is it focused on lust, but it's focused on our hearts, right? That's where sin happens, in our hearts. It starts in our hearts. And when our hearts are yearning for something other than Jesus, when our hearts are devoted to something else, Jesus doesn't want to be Lord of just our actions. The pharisees were good in their actions. But Jesus wants to be Lord over our hearts, and over our thoughts. On the one side, Jesus is showing us that no one can claim perfection here, right? We have all sinned according to this definition of adultery. But on the other side, He's also reminding us that in the *Kingdom of God* He's the King, and He desires that our hearts are fully submitted and surrendered to him.

So to emphasize this, Jesus uses some extremes. If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. Eternal separation from God is extreme, and so Jesus uses some extreme analogies. If there is something in your life that is causing you to sin and causing your heart to belong somewhere else, if there's something, or someone, or anything else, that pulls you away from the Lord, cut it off. Cut it out of your life. It might be extreme to cut that out of your life, but eternal separation from God is the alternative extreme that we may be heading for.

Jesus points us to radical purity. And then Jesus continues on the theme of adultery by talking about marriage. *It has been said anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce. But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.*

The original Greek better translates this as *anyone who divorces his wife except for sexual immorality or unfaithfulness causes her to become an adulteress*. And so, Jesus talks about marriage and adultery a couple times in the gospels, but particularly in Mark, He makes certain that we understand that this isn't just the case for husbands, but for wives too. He said to them *whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adult adultery*.

So the question is, why is divorce and remarriage apart from sexual immorality considered adultery? This goes back to the beginning, when God created man and woman in Genesis, and He said the two

shall become one flesh. That was God's original concept for marriage, and Jesus explains this in Matthew 19. *"Haven't you read"* he replied, *"that at the beginning the creator made them male and female. And He said for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate."*

Adultery is a tearing apart of the flesh in marriage, as well as when individuals engage in a sexual relationship, which is only intended within the covenant of marriage. The two come together and become one. The two become one flesh. This is demonstrated physically, but it's realized spiritually. And so, when someone engages in sexual immorality, they're now tearing apart that oneness, that one flesh, and becoming one with someone else.

That's why Jesus says, if the divorce was not because of sexual immorality, even though the paperwork may say *divorced*, spiritually the two are still one flesh. And the tearing apart of that one flesh, *adultery*, would happen at remarriage. But if someone's spouse was sexually unfaithful, that spouse has already torn apart the wholeness of the flesh, of that one flesh, which is why Jesus says in this case, divorce is permitted because the oneness has already been torn.

Adultery is a tearing apart. Divorce outside of sexual immorality is an adultery, a tearing of the body. Similarly, lust is an adultery, a tearing of the mind. So, adultery is a tearing apart of the mind and body, but not just from someone's spouse. It is a tearing apart of the mind in the body from God. And again, if this is a *Kingdom-living* lesson, we have to understand that Jesus isn't just emphasizing the law – *adultery*. Nor is He even just emphasizing the intention of the heart of the law – *lust or sexual immorality*. Jesus is emphasizing the fulfillment of the law, which is found in himself and in Christ. The fulfillment of the law on adultery is faithfulness and purity.

Throughout scripture God calls us to faithfulness and purity, and He uses marriage as an example of our relationship with him. In the Old Testament, we see this marriage type relationship between God and his people, the Israelites. But it's often demonstrated as a broken relationship. Perhaps this is nowhere better illustrated than in the book of Hosea. In the very beginning of the book, of Hosea, it says *"The Lord said to him, 'Hosea, go take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord.'"*

Hosea the prophet, was called to marry someone who would continue to prostitute herself, and God said, *this is what my people are doing to me. I am the faithful loving husband and you are prostituting yourself with the world.*

Does Jesus care about lust? Absolutely! He wants to be Lord over our eyes, and over our mind, and over our hearts. Does Jesus care about sex sexual immorality? Absolutely! He wants to be Lord in our marriages and in our relationships. But more than that, Jesus cares about our faithfulness and purity with the Father.

We are the adulterous wife. We are the ones who continually lust over and flirt with other lovers. We are the ones who continually give ourselves, and our minds, and our hearts to lesser things. God is a jealous God. He wants our whole hearts. He wants our faithfulness and our purity for him alone.

But the Old Testament isn't the only place that uses marriage as an analogy for our relationship with God. In the New Testament we see a renewed marriage relationship with the church – the pure spotless bride and Jesus the groom. Jesus was faithful and pure. And in Christ, we receive by faith, his faithfulness and his purity.

In revelation, John sees a multitude from every nation, tribe, people, and language standing before the throne, who are dressed in robes that have been washed white by the blood of the lamb, who have been made pure because of Jesus' sacrifice. And later, He calls the One who sits on the throne, Faithful and True. Jesus has shown us the way of faithfulness and purity to the Father. He has made the way for us to be faithful and pure. Jesus is the way, and He calls us to walk in his faithfulness and purity toward the Father, and with our spouses, and with one another. Our faithfulness and purity come from him.

There are a couple bigger takeaways that I want to focus on this morning. And the first is that Jesus calls us to radical purity, but purity is a means to an end: *Christ*. Unfortunately, we have so often made radical purity a means to a different end: self-righteousness. We need to make sure not to make radical purity just another law, just a new law, a harder law that we try to find our righteousness or our worth in.

I grew up in the whole *True Love waits* movement. You know, purity rings abstinence, pledges, purity contracts, the *I Kissed Dating Goodbye* book. All good stuff, except when it becomes a law unto itself; except when it becomes something that we base our righteousness in; except when it becomes something that becomes an idol, or that creates spiritual pride.

The *haves* and the *have-nots* – those who have maintained their purity, and those who have fallen from grace. For those who have fallen from grace, who have made mistakes, who've engaged in sexual sin, well the perfect record is tarnished. You might as well as give up trying, or you might as well continue to live in guilt.

I have seen this passage used that way, but that entirely loses the thrust of what Jesus started with. According to Jesus' interpretation of this passage, we are all guilty of adultery in this definition. But our righteousness doesn't come when it's not based on *our* perfection. It's based on *his* perfection. And Jesus' call to radical purity isn't a new law about earning righteousness, but a means of recognizing the extreme nature of separation from God, and choosing to let nothing stand in the way of your relationship with him, including and especially, sexual sin.

This passage and the whole *Sermon On The Mount*, is about *Kingdom-living* that *Kingdom-failing*. Yes, we're supposed to see the depths of our sinful nature. And yes, Jesus is telling us to radically attack the things in our life that feed that sinful nature, the things that keep us from him. But He's not setting up a new means by which to earn righteousness.

That guy that wrote the *I Kiss Dating Goodbye* book, he isn't even a believer anymore. And it makes me think that he never understood the true heart of Jesus' calling to radical purity. See, to him radical purity was a means to an end, but it was the wrong end. He made it. He achieved his goal. He checked the box. But somehow, he stopped loving the Lord. Radical purity became a means to an end, but that end was self-righteousness.

Radical purity is supposed to be a means to an end, but that end is supposed to be Christ, who cares

about purity, who cares about religious behavior, who cares about having all the right theology. If you're not seeking Christ, just a handful of verses before this Jesus said "*blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God*". If my desire is Christ, then my means will be a pure-heart-radical-purity, which I can only find in, and achieve in and through him. Purity is the means to an end: *Christ*.

The second point: Jesus is the only one who is faithful and pure. You might be wondering *what do i do if there's been a divorce a tearing apart of the flesh? What do I do? What do I do if I've engaged in the oneness that's only intended for marriage* and you're outside of a marriage covenant?

What do we do when we are unfaithful and impure in our thoughts, or in our deeds, and because we are unfaithful and impure in our hearts and in our sinful nature?

We look to and rely on and embrace the faithfulness and purity of Jesus.

This is a passage about *Kingdom-living*, not *Kingdom-failing*. Yes it's about adultery against others, but it's mostly about adultery against God, our unfaithfulness and our impurity against him.

The lesson before this was on reconciliation. The most important reconciliation that we can make is with the Father. And reconciliation with the Father has been made, was purchased by the blood of Jesus.

If you have made mistakes sexually or relationally, Jesus restores, Jesus redeems, Jesus forgives, Jesus heals, and Jesus says *take upon you my faithfulness and my purity and now come follow me*, right? He says *stop living adulterously against me. your faithful bridegroom. Be the faithful and pure bride that I have called you to be, and that in me, I have made you to be. Leave your adulterous ways and come follow me.*

Some final questions I want to leave us with – the first is, do you know Jesus as the Faithful Husband?

And I get it. For guys, this is harder to wrap our heads around, until we think of ourselves as the wayward wife, the one prostituting ourselves with other lovers. For all of us men and women, whether in our hearts, or in our minds, or in our actions, we seek after and we love lesser things all the time. But Jesus loves us, and He is faithful to us, and He demonstrated his great love and faithfulness to us on the cross, asking that the Father would forgive us for our adulterous ways. That's love.

If we're still seeing Jesus as the demanding law giver, the one who says *follow me or else*, we don't understand his heart, and we don't understand how He is the fulfillment of everything that we need. He is the Faithful Husband. He is calling us into his faithfulness and his purity. Do you know Jesus as the Faithful Husband?

And second, do you know that purity is a means to an end: Christ? Or have you been viewing purity as a means to righteousness?

If we view purity as a means to our own righteousness, then the goal of staying pure is law keeping. It's spiritual pride. It's self-righteousness. And for those who are struggling or who have failed to keep their purity, if you are viewing purity as a means to your own righteousness, then the result is guilt and shame, and a scarlet letter that hangs over you. The Apostle Paul says that the law is good because it points out our sin. But in Christ the law is great because it points us, to the Savior. But if we just view

the Savior as just another law giver, then what kind of hope is that? That's what the Pharisees were doing, and Jesus accused them of keeping people from entering the kingdom.

Calling Jesus our Savior means that He has saved us from the penalty of our sins, that He is saving us from the power of our current sins, and that one day He will save us from the presence of any sin.

Salvation is both an event and a process. We have been saved and we are being saved. And in that, if we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us, and Jesus seeks to restore and to redeem us. And when we wrestle in these sins, Jesus is pointing us to his faithfulness and his purity, and saying *don't you know how much I love you?* If you did, you would want to radically cut out anything that keeps us from Jesus.

Radical purity is a means to an end: *Christ*. If we make it about anything else, we entirely lose the reason behind staying pure. We lose the heart of why our faithfulness is so valuable.



TAKE-AWAY SUMMARY

Do you know Jesus as the Faithful Husband?

Do you know that Purity is a means to the end: CHRIST?

WORSHIP SONGS:

This is Amazing Grace | Do It Again | Oceans | Take My Life
