Building an Indestructible Life

*Honoring Marriage; Dealing with Lust*

Matthew 5:27-32

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**Introduction**

The Sermon on the Mount is a beautiful narrative by our LORD about righteous living. Someone summarized the sermon in this way: “It is a description of how to live a life that is dedicated to God, and pleasing to God, free from hypocrisy, full of love and grace, full of wisdom and discernment.” As God’s children, we should desire to read and study the words of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ. After Jesus finishes speaking, the scriptures tell us that the people were astonished (or amazed) at His teaching because they could tell that He had authority (Re: Mt. 7:28). We need to recognize and respect the authority of Christ and His teaching. How do we do this? By doing the will of the Father (Re: Mt. 7:21).

John reminds us that “*God is light and in Him is no darkness at all*” (1 John 1:5b). The darkness that we see in the world is not from God, but from Satan. Satan is continually scheming to try and keep people from God, or pull people away from God. For those of us who have acknowledged who God is, and have been obedient from the heart and put on the name of Christ, Paul warns to always be wary and prepared to fight the good fight of faith (Re: 1 Tim. 6:12). In so warning, Paul tells the Ephesian brethren that they must put on the whole armor of God so that they might be able to withstand the wiles (or scheming) of the devil (Re: Eph. 6:11). When one is not prepared, and falls to the deceit of Satan, the result is sin. “*He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning*” (1 John 3:8).

What children of God need to understand is that we can rule over sin. From the beginning, God has provided instruction on how man can rule over sin. When Cain’s offering to God was not accepted like Abel’s, God speaks with Cain and warns him about his attitude. “*So the LORD said to Cain, ‘Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it*’” (Gen. 4:6-7).

In our world today, sin lies at every door. Satan is using every tool at his disposal to try and convince us to continue in sin so that we can be separated from God. Our culture is selling lies and encouraging people to do whatever is right in their own eyes as “everyone is going to heaven.” If we allow ourselves to be filled with the schemes of Satan, we have made the death of Christ useless (Re: Heb. 10:26). Paul tells the brethren in Rome that they are to be “*dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our LORD. Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts*” (Rom. 6:11-12). We can, and must, rule over sin.

During His sermon, Jesus speaks on the relationship between a husband and a wife and the importance of maintaining that relationship. Jesus infers, in His reference about divorce, that the marriage of a man and a woman is honorable in God’s sight, and that making light of the relationship is dangerous for your soul. Jesus also warns of a sin of the heart, lust, and the consequences if we allow this sin to control our lives. The marriage relationship that God has designed is honorable, and men and women must beware of lust enticing sin into our life.

**Marriage is Honorable**

From the beginning, God’s plan was for a man to marry a woman and become a family. When God saw that Adam was alone, He determined to make a helper comparable to him (Re: Gen. 2:18). God took a rib from Adam and created Woman, and through this creation, designed the relationship that should exist between a man and his wife. When Adam saw Eve, he stated, “’*This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’ Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh*” (Gen. 2:23-24). The relationship between a man and a woman, who have become husband and wife, is honorable in God’s sight. Christ Himself states that this relationship is from God. During His ministry in the region of Judea, when the Pharisees test Him regarding marriage, He quotes from Genesis 2:24 and then states, *“So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”* Do you hear what Christ said? What God has joined together! The marriage relationship between a man and a woman is honorable because God has joined them together (Re: Mt. 19:1-6)! That is why the Hebrew writer can state, “*Let marriage be held in honor among all*” (Heb. 13:4, ESV).

Paul tells the church in Corinth that a man is to have his own wife, and a woman to have her own husband (Re: 1 Cor. 7:2). This is the righteous relationship from God. Any other relationship that is defined from man is unrighteous. So, no matter what our society or human laws allow, the relationship that is honorable in God’s sight is between a man and a woman. Any other relationship, such as a homosexual relationship, is not honorable in God’s sight as it is an abomination to God (Re: Lev. 18:22; 20:13). As the new law/testament clearly states, a man is to have his own wife, and a woman is to have her own husband. This relationship between a man and a woman, is described as being similar to the relationship that Christ has with the church. Paul, in his letter to the Ephesian brethren, tells of the proper relationship between husband and wife. The husband is to be the head of the wife, as Christ is head of the church. A husband is to love and cherish his wife as Christ loves and cherishes the church. The wife is to be in submission to the husband as the church is subject to Christ. Paul concludes his thoughts by stating that the husband and wife should love and respect each other (Re: Ephesians 5:22-33).

Respect for God and respect for your spouse will lead to stronger marriages. When one has a true love for God, his thoughts and actions will always be determined by what God states in His word. “*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths*” (Prov. 3:5-6). If we love and trust God, we will allow His word to guide our lives. We must be careful not to allow our own fleshly desires, or the thoughts and ideas of our culture, dictate our actions and choices. Malachi reminds us that God hates divorce (Re: Malachi 2:16). Malachi goes on to warn in that same verse that followers of God must take heed to their spirit, and not deal treacherously.

Christ states in Mathew 5:27, that it has been said to those of old, “*You shall not commit adultery*.” This is a command given to the children of Israel while at Mount Sinai and one of the Ten Commandments. God wanted His children to respect the marriage relationship that He had created from the beginning. Adultery is “unlawful intercourse with another’s spouse” (New Testament Greek Lexicon). When either a husband or wife is unfaithful and has a sexual relationship with another person, they are committing adultery, an act directly opposed to the command of God. Because of the hardness of the people’s hearts during the time of Moses, Moses instructed a certificate of divorce to be issued to break the covenant between husband and wife (Re: Mt. 19:8). Christ, in His sermon, states that this “certificate of divorce” is non-binding in God’s eyes, with the exception of fornication (which breaks the covenant relationship anyway). When a husband or wife divorce for a reason other than fornication, and engage in a sexual relationship with another person, Jesus states that they are committing adultery. Or if the husband or wife divorce, and the divorced spouse engages in a sexual relationship with another person, Jesus states that the one who divorced causes the other to commit adultery. Either way, divorce for reasons other than fornication, can cause the husband or wife to commit adultery. Remember the command from God that Jesus confirms: “*You shall not commit adultery*.”

As already stated, the Hebrew writer states that marriage is honorable to all. But the writer goes on to state that when the marriage covenant is broken, or someone participates in a unholy union with the other sex (fornication), then there are consequences to these actions. “*Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous*” (Heb. 13:4; ESV). The marriage bed is to be undefiled, meaning the sexual relationship between a husband and a wife is deemed righteous before God, and that the husband and wife should remain faithful to each other. The warning is for those who are unfaithful – God will judge those who are guilty of adultery. This is in reference to the physical act of adultery (“unlawful intercourse with another’s spouse” (New Testament Greek Lexicon)). Yet Christ, in His sermon, has already warned of another type of adultery—adultery in the heart.

**Adultery in the Heart / Dealing with Lust**

Christ states a part of the old law that the people listening should have known, *“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’”* But then Jesus adds to this statement the teachings of the new law that He is bringing: “*But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart”* (Matt. 5:27-28). The marriage relationship is so important to God that Jesus clarifies that when a man looks at a woman for the purpose of increasing his lust, they have already committed adultery in the heart. Lust is “intense or unbridled sexual desire” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary) in an illicit manner in God’s eyes, and if not checked, these unbridled desires will lead to sin which leads to death (Re: James 1:15). We must remember the difference between God-designed sexual desire in the marriage relationship (Re: Gen. 2:18-25), and an illicit (not sanctioned by law) unbridled sexual desire that is of the flesh. God designed man and woman to love and admire each other in a manner where they were not ashamed to be naked with each other. God intended for the sexual relationship between a husband and a wife to be intimate, pure, and joyful (Re: Song of Solomon 4 & 7).

King David is a classic example of a follower of God allowing his lust to lead to sin. David looked upon Bathsheba, and then he pursued Bathsheba and committed adultery, which then led to murder (Re: 2 Samuel 11). How different the circumstances could have turned out if David had looked upon Bathsheba, and then determined in his heart to turn away and continue to pursue righteous thoughts.

Jesus’ statement is very thought-provoking in how far one must go to ensure that we are not ensnared in the lust of the eyes and flesh. Jesus states that whatever causes you to sin, you must get rid of it. Your hand causes you to sin…cut it off. Your eye causes you to sin…pluck it out. Of course your hand or your eye are not the root cause of the sin. It’s your heart, your mind, your attitude. Those sights and thoughts that lead to illicit ideas and actions must be eradicated from our daily lives.

Satan will continue to throw his fiery darts to try and draw us away from God. The “things of the world” are the tools that Satan has at his disposal for deceiving mankind. John reminds us that “*all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world*” (1 John 2:16). Lust is a valuable asset in the arsenal of Satan. The world believes and illustrates in many different ways that fulfilling the lust of the flesh through illicit sexual encounters is acceptable and even encouraged. The idea that “if it feels good to me, then it must be good” is prevalent in our society. Advertisers love the idea of lust – sex sells everything from cars to hamburgers, and even chicken wings!

So how should we deal with lust when Satan throws these temptations at us? I believe that Christians must travel dual paths when dealing with lustful thoughts in their hearts. There are things to which we should “just say ‘NO’” and put them to death, and there are things we must proactively do to help keep these thoughts from our minds. We must try our best to get away from these entanglements of the flesh, flee from them, while at the same time filling our minds with spiritual thoughts. We should live by the Spirit.

**Put to Death the Deeds of the Body**

Paul writes to the brethren in Rome and encourages them not to live according to the flesh. He reminds them that those who are in the flesh, individuals who live according to the flesh and set their minds on the things of the flesh, cannot please God and do not have the Spirit of Christ in them (Re: Romans 8:5-11). Because of God’s love and the giving of His Son, *“we are debtors – not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live”* (Romans 8:12-13). God is providing instruction that there are some things in this carnal world that must just be put out of our lives. Make the determination in your heart that you’re not going to allow lust to control you. Put it to death.

Paul continues to spread this idea about putting to death the deeds of the flesh. To the churches of Galatia, he writes that if we are Christ’s, then we have “*crucified the flesh with its passions and desires*” (Galatians 5:24). When something is crucified, it is put to death. Paul instructs the brethren in Galatia, and us today, to crucify those things of the flesh that separate us from God. Continuing to try and live with Christ and live with these lusts dooms one for failure. We are to *“put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts”* (Ephesians 4:22) and *“put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire”* (Colossians 3:5). Those who fail to eliminate these actions from their lives are sons of disobedience and will receive the wrath of God (Re: Colossians 3:6). Our objective is to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (Re: 2 Corinthians 10:3-6).

**Live by the Spirit**

In properly dealing with lustful thoughts, we must actively strive to fill our hearts with the attitude of living by the Spirit. If we identify as sons of God, the scripture states that we should be led by the Spirit of God and suffer with Christ so that we might be glorified together with Him (Re: Romans 8:14-17). Having our minds filled with God’s Spirit, through His word, will allow us to meditate on things that are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, and of good report (Re: Philippians 4:8) and remove any thoughts of the flesh. By living in the Spirit, we will walk in the Spirit (Re: Galatians 5:25) and the resulting actions will be an illustration of the righteousness of God.

We cannot allow this world to conform our minds and actions. We are to be living sacrifices to God, holy and acceptable. We accomplish this by not conforming to the world and by being transformed by the renewing of our mind (Re: Romans 12:1-2). When the spirit of our mind is renewed, and we put on the new man created according to God, we will exhibit true righteousness and holiness (Re: Ephesians 4:23-24). This new man that we put on *“is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created Him”* (Colossians 3:10). We were created in God’s image, and God’s expectation is that we live our lives according to His designed purpose—holy and beloved, putting on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering—and live our lives in the love of God and receive the peace of God allowing it to rule our hearts (Re: Colossians 3:12-15).

**Conclusion – “*Flee youthful lusts*”**

Paul, in his final letter to Timothy (Re: 2 Timothy 2:22), instructs Timothy to run away from those lusts which could infiltrate his heart and pull him away from God (“*flee youthful lusts*”). He is to go after those attributes which are acceptable in God’s sight (“*pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace*”) along with others who are traveling the same pathway *(“with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart”*). If our minds are focused on living our life for God and with God, we will be able to rule over the sin that lies at our door. Focusing on Christ, His example, and His word will allow us to control any lustful thoughts that enter our mind. The focus of our relationship with a potential spouse, or our current spouse, should be to do the will of the Father and not be a hearer only. We can do this by laying aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, the fleshly desires that Satan will tempt us with, and receiving with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save our souls (Re: James 1:21-25).

In Isaiah 5:20, the prophet Isaiah is providing a warning for those who try and sell the idea that evil is good. *“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!”* Brother Dennis Allen shared some thoughts on this verse that were very thought-provoking:

* Those who pervert the moral order established by God receive popular support.
* Those who defend the principles established by God receive strong criticisms and even condemnation by society.
* Doing what I want does not demonstrate character.
* Demonstrating self-control to do what is right shows integrity.

As children of God, let us strive to be obedient to His word and show a true love for our Father in heaven by not doing what is right in our own eyes, but doing what is right in the eyes of our Creator. Having a true love for God means loving what He wants us to do! Being made in the image of God (Re: Genesis 1:26-27) and having the mind of Christ (Re: Philippians 2:5), we can live our lives according to God’s word and have rule over the sin of lusts which lie at our door. Let us all purpose in our hearts to “*walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh*” (Galatians 5:16).