

TRINITY COLLEGE OF THE BIBLE AND SEMINARY

THE OLIBTERATION OF MARRIAGE

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The Gathering Storm

One of the great leaders in history was the interesting Winston Churchill. In the 1930's Winston was a political outcast in most of Britain. The reason why is because he gave a prophetic warning regarding the ascent of Nazi Germany and no one wanted to hear it. Everyone was still too scared and terrified regarding World War I. In Churchill's six-volume history of the war, he penned the first volume and titled it "The Gathering Storm". The immediate context of this work and the subject matter is Europe's long years of denial regarding the Nazi threat. The immediate context is that, like it or not, due to extreme liberalism and the secularization of our culture, the storm is gathering over human life, gender and sexuality, the family, the church, and most of all the sanctity of marriage. As we look throughout Holy scripture the Lord expects a certain standard to be upheld by his people within the framework of Biblical ethics and most importantly the sanctity of marriage.

We find ourselves living in a Playboy world very similar to the Greek and Roman worlds of paganism. Marriage fidelity is threatened and under attack. Within our secular progressive society, marriage, sexual fidelity, and virginity is all scorned, ridiculed, and laughed at! As thinking Christians, we must understand that inward holiness and purity is one of the defining marks of our sanctification (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4). God's righteousness will affect the inward heart. This is precisely what Jesus Christ preaches in the Sermon on the Mount regarding adultery and sexual sin in general.

Matthew 5:27-30 (ESV), “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than your whole body go into hell.”

Immediate Context

It’s important that we rightfully divide the word of truth in its proper context (2 Timothy 2:15). In so doing, we discover that here our Lord has given the ethics of the kingdom, *The Beatitudes* (Matthew 5:1-16). This is followed by Christ’s relationship to the Law of God (Matthew 5:17-20). It is there that Christ closes with a powerful statement, “Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” Everything else Jesus is going to say is going to hinge off this statement. The self-righteous Pharisees’ knew nothing of inward holiness and purity of heart. They knew nothing of being “poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3), or “pure in heart” (Matthew 5:8). Thus, our Lord gives six illustrations regarding right religion refuting their counterfeit religion. We will see three important truths regarding sexual sin and adultery. The deed, the desire, and the deliverance.

The Deed
(Matthew 5:27)

The Lord is quoting back to the far context here, “You shall not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14). The sixth commandment protects the sanctity of life and the seventh commandment protects the sanctity of marriage. Anyone engaged in external religion alone, violates both. The reason why is because in their hearts they attack the sanctity of life with hate (Matthew 5:21-26), and they attack the sanctity of marriage with lust (Matthew 5:28). That is the case whether one does so outwardly or not. Anger and sexual lust are dynamic influences upon society. For the individual who wants to entertain either one, will soon find out that they are controlled, rather than being in control.

In today’s society sex crimes are at a all time high, while divorce, perversion, adultery is all justified. God had designed sexual intent for the marriage of one man and one woman (1 Corinthians 7:3, 5). All of this is marginalized under the expression of practices such as: castration, celibacy, fornication, adultery, and homosexuality. Under the Mosaic Law adultery was one of the most despicable sins, punishable by death (Leviticus 20:10, Deuteronomy 22:22). The New Testament is just as clear, “Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, effeminate, nor homosexuals, will inherit the kingdom of God.” The word adultery in this context (Matthew 5:27) in Greek is μοιχάομαι. This word in this context, refers to sexual intercourse between a man or a woman when one or both of them is married.

The Desire
(Matthew 5:28)

To look upon a woman with lust is the desire Jesus speaks of. It is instructive to note that is in the present participle which means a continual process of looking. What our Lord is saying is that it's not the looking that causes the sin in the heart but the sin in the heart that causes the looking. This is the evidence of a vile and immoral heart. This incitement goes for women as well (Proverbs 5). Sin always begins in the heart (Job 31:1, Job 31:7-8). The New Testament instructs us to "cultivate a pure heart" (2 Timothy 2:22). The desire is between a godly heart and an ungodly heart. There is no middle ground in upholding the sanctity of marriage and the same is true within our relationship with Christ Jesus.

The Deliverance
(Matthew 5:29-30)

The issue does have to do with the heart. One might say then "why are we tearing out eyes, and cutting off hands if it's a heart problem?" In looking at the interpretation of the text we must understand this text is figuratively speaking of those physical things that cause us to be tempted by Satan. The main point of Jesus in verse 29 is to give up what is necessary! Whatever it takes to protect us from evil (James 4:7). Jesus is saying nothing is more important than heart righteousness, that's why he states, "Whatever makes you stumble" (Matthew 5:29). Charles Spurgeon put it like this, "Better a blind saint than a quick-sighted sinner." The deliverance is found in the doctrine of mortification.

The doctrine of mortification deals with sin right now. There are certain sins right now that we can have victory over. At the heart of the gospel the Christian is to engage in a life-long battle against the sinful tendencies that remain in them, despite there having been brought to faith

and new life in Christ. Fighting sin with human strength alone will only lead to external righteousness and self-righteousness. This is why the Holy Spirit and active faith in the Lord Jesus Christ's victory is certain. This is all about the exercise of grace or our progressive sanctification. The puritan writer John Owen makes it very clear that:

“Neglect of this duty makes the inner man decay instead of renewing him. Paul affirms (2 Cor. 4:16) that the inward man is renewed day by day, while the outward man perishes. Those who neglect mortification allow the inner man to perish. If it is allowed to lie still, it withers and decays (Revelation 3:2), and sin seeks to harden our hearts (Hebrews 3:13). The omission of mortification withers grace while lust flourishes. The frame of the heart grown worse and worse. When sin gains a considerable victory, it breaks the bones of the soul (Psalm 31:10; 51:8). It makes a man weak, sick, and ready to die.”

Conclusion

In this passage Jesus has made very clear what we cannot control or kill it! It must be discarded without any hesitation. No one can deliver themselves, not the scribes, the Pharisees, and not the Rockstar celebrity pastors. These impossible standards given by our Lord are to drive us to the source of the sermon. The sinless Lord Jesus Christ. In the sight of God, we are all murderers and adulterers. Many seek to justify themselves but this sermon shows us all our sin and the proper response should drive us all to the cross where we can receive cleansing when we obey God's plan of salvation (Acts 2:38, Mark 16:16). As the secular storm gathers over marriage, if our society would turn her eyes to the objective Word of God marriages would be stable and nurtured. Without a healthy marriage and a healthy family life as a foundation,

there can be no lasting community. Christians must contend in the midst of the storm for marriage as God's gift to humanity, and that union is to last for a lifetime. Adultery and lust have destroyed, devastated families by ripping parents from their children. As Christians we must declare with our mouths and lives that the God of glory has created marriage for his good, glory, and His holy institution made up of one man and one woman.

Bibliography

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