**BIBLE TALK Radio Broadcast**

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**“If Your Right Eye Causes You To Sin…”**

Jesus said in Matthew 5:27-28, *“You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”* Jesus calls upon us here, not just to be pure in our actions, but to be pure in our hearts. It is not enough that we do not commit the outward, overt act of adultery, we must also not lust after a woman in our hearts. Now, when Jesus says “whoever looks at a woman to lust for her,” He is not talking about one who is tempted to lust and then refuses the temptation, but He is talking about one who stops and begins to think about how nice it would be to be with her, to enjoy her through imagined participation. Jesus says this one has already committed adultery with her in his heart. What goes on in our hearts is also a concern of our Lord and should be a concern of ours. You remember, Jesus said in the beatitudes, *“Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.”* (Matt. 5:8)

But in a world where we are bombarded with sexual stimulation, how does a man keep his heart pure? The movies, television, even the commercials, the internet and even walking down the street, provides us with ample opportunities to look and lust. I think some have concluded that there is no way they can do what the Lord is instructing us in this passage, and they have given up on the fight. Well, Jesus gives us the answer to how a man can keep his heart pure in a lust driven culture in the very next two verses. After saying, “*whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart,”* He then says, *“If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”* (Matt. 5:29-30) It is interesting that we do not give as much attention to these two verses although they provide the solution for the problem introduced in the previous verses. I think one reason we do not give these two verses the attention they deserve is because we do not know what to do with them. How do we interpret what the Lord is saying? Is He telling you to literally pluck out your eye and cut off your hand? Obviously, that cannot be what He is saying, because it would not solve your problem. If you plucked out the right eye, you can still lust with the left eye. But if Jesus is not encouraging us to literally pluck out our eye and cut off our hand in an effort to resist sin, what is He saying? That is what I want to talk about on our program today – what does Jesus mean when He says, *“If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you….”*? I want to warn you that I do not believe answering this question will make us feel more comfortable with this text. In this passage Jesus exposes the awfulness of sin and describes the painful steps necessary to deal with it. This is a challenging text that speaks very frankly with us about what it will take to be victorious over the greatest threat we face, and that is sin.

First of all, I think the Lord wants us to see that sin is serious business. Our society doesn’t treat it that way. We are living in a time when people simply do not take sin seriously. Just listen to the names we give it. People don’t like to say that they lied and deceived people; they talk about telling “little white lies” or being a little “loose with the truth.” People don’t like to say that they use vulgar, obscene or profane language; they talk about using language that is a little colorful at times. People don’t talk about being addicted to pornography or lusting after inappropriate images on the internet; they like to say that they struggle sometimes with looking at things they shouldn’t. People don’t say they committed adultery; they prefer to say that they were guilty of a private indiscretion. And if sin is no big deal, then we certainly should not be punished for it. The idea is, “surely God would not send me to hell for that.”

The teaching of Jesus stands in sharp contrast to our culture’s view of sin. Keep in mind the sin involved in this context is not murder, or even the outward act of adultery. The man has not taken action yet. He just thought about it. Jesus says that he lusted for a woman in his heart. A lot of people would say, “What’s the big deal?” In fact, probably a majority of Americans don’t even believe this is wrong. But notice what Jesus said about it – listen to His language. He said that this man *has committed adultery with her in his heart.*  Lusting for another woman is not a trivial matter to Jesus. This is serious business.

But He is not done. After calling this “adultery in the heart” Jesus then gives this warning, *“If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”* Jesus says that a heart filled with lust will condemn a man to hell. Some will complain that this is harsh and does not fit with the loving God we find in the Bible. But this is our problem – we have not come to know the true God of the Bible. Yes, He is a loving God. But He is also a holy and just God who sees sin in a much different way than people in our culture. Jesus has a different view of sin. He says that a man lusting after a woman who is not his wife is committing adultery in the heart. Those who are guilty of adultery will not inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10). Romans 6:23 says, *“the wages of sin is death,”* that is, eternal death, eternal separation from God in hell. Being sent to hell does not tell us how terrible God is, but it tells us how terrible sin is. Hell is the just consequence of sin. If we want to avoid the punishment of eternal death, hell, then we have to start seeing sin the way Jesus sees it. It’s a big deal.

Secondly, Jesus statement, also teaches us that dealing with sin requires radical action. Notice again what He says, *“If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”*  Let me just begin by saying that this second point is simply the natural outcome of the first. If sin is serious business – if it is our eternal destiny, heaven and hell that hangs in the balance, then this point naturally follows. If sin will send us to hell we should do whatever it takes, however radical it may be, to rid our lives of this terrible plague.

We understand this when it comes to our physical bodies. All of us know of people who have had one of their legs or arms amputated because of an infection. The infection became so bad that the leg or arm had to be removed to save their life. They did not want to lose their arm or leg, but even more importantly they did not want to die. In light of what is at stake they agree to take radical action to rid their body of this infection.

This is exactly the point Jesus is trying to make about sin in this text. His point is not that we should physically mutilate the body, because this will not help us avoid sin. As we mention earlier the man who plucks out his right eye can still lust with his left. What Jesus is saying is that we must take whatever actions are necessary to rid our lives of this terrible disease called sin. What He is saying is that sometimes drastic actions must be taken. We need to recognize and accept that moral purity at times will call for ruthless acts of self-denial. Let’s make this really simple: I have to do whatever it takes to keep sin out of my life.

This is an easy principle to agree with, but it is a tough principle to live. Let us look at some examples of what this means. To rid my life of sin, I may have to cut some friends out of my life. I may have an old friend who is not a Christian. When I am with him I find it hard to serve God. He always seems to lure me back into sinful things that I left behind when I decided to follow Jesus, such as filthy language, or looking at pornography. The Bible warns us about evil companions. Paul said in 1 Cor. 15:33, *“Evil company corrupts good habits.”* What I need to do is cut that friend out of my life.

Someone might complain, “That isn’t fair. I’ve been friends with this person my whole life. I shouldn’t have to give that up.” But that’s not what Jesus said in this passage. He said we should do whatever we must to rid our lives from sin. If I have some friends in my life who keep me from doing that, they need to go. Better to lose them than to lose my soul.

To rid my life of sin, I may need to cut off my cable TV or get rid of my computer and the internet. There are many appropriate uses of television and computers, and the internet. But we also understand that there are a lot of ways to corrupt our minds and get caught up in sin with the materials we can access through television and the internet. One of the most obvious is the sin Jesus discusses in this passage. There is plenty of material that can lead a man to lust after a woman and to commit adultery in his heart. Pornography is so easy to access through television and the internet. Did you realize that 12% of the websites on the internet are pornographic? That is about 25 million websites. The problem is complicated by easy access, and the perception of privacy. Almost everyone has a computer and has access to the internet. They have access to it in the privacy of their own home. To put away sin I may need to get rid of these.

Now, I realize that there are other steps that can be taken to address this problem, other than cutting off the cable or getting rid of the internet. We can put the computer in a public place in our house and place limits on when it can be used. We can put internet filters on the computer to block certain websites. We can monitor each other’s usage and hold each other accountable. We can have an accountability partner check up on us. But at the end of the day, we’ve got to deal with this problem. If these other steps are not working, then I have to do whatever it takes to rid my life of this sin. If it comes to it, I may need to cut off the cable, or give up my private home office, or give up my laptop – if that is what it takes.

But also, to rid my life of sin, I may need to give up my job. This is a tough one. Some people will immediately object that we cannot give up our jobs because we have to provide for our families. However, we cannot sacrifice our souls to do that. I may be working for a boss who pressures me to be dishonest. Either I stand up to that and refuse, or I must find other work. I may have a boss who makes unreasonable demands on my time and causes me to neglect important obligations to my family and to the church. Either I stand up to that and refuse, or I must find other work. I may be working with someone who puts my faithfulness to my spouse at risk. Either I find a way to stop that, or find other work. No job is so good or lucrative that keeping it is worth losing my soul.

What we are saying is that sometimes putting away sin requires radical action.

Jesus said, *“If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.”*

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(This lessons is based on an outline by David Banning entitled, “If Your Right Eye Causes You To Stumble...”)