

Jesus on Lust

By Don Green

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Bible Verse: Matthew 5:27-30
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Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

Please turn in your Bibles to the gospel of Matthew chapter 5 as we return to our study of the Sermon on the Mount, and we are in the middle of an extended section, verses 21 through 48, where Jesus explains the kind of righteousness that God requires in order to be in his presence and the kind of righteousness after which his true disciples aspire, and we've seen that God requires a heart righteousness. He says in verse 20, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven, and then he systematically goes through six different kinds of examples to show what he means by the heart righteousness. These examples are not exhaustive, they are illustrative, but they are very, very searching. They show us that the law of God exercises the realm of its authority not only over our external actions, but over the very motions, desires, and impulses of the human heart. When God prohibits murder in the Ten Commandments, he also prohibits anger and hatred, and as we're going to see, when he prohibits in Exodus chapter 20 verse 14, the sin of adultery, he's not only forbidding the physical act, but he is also forbidding all of the heart motions of lust that lead to the act. Now it's by a gracious act of providence that we are on this text and preaching this text early in another version of so-called "Pride Month." It is a fitting text. This is not something that I forced upon the pulpit schedule. This just came up naturally in the course of things as often is the case as God leads his people through his word as it is taught over time, and so I will have some things to say about that later on in today's message.

But what Jesus is doing here, let's read, first of all, verses 27 through 30 to set the text before us, and then we will just go through it and trust the Spirit of God to open our eyes and hearts to understanding, to conviction of sin, and even to the conversion of souls if God would be so pleased to use our time together in that way. Jesus speaking, the Lord of all creation says in verse 27,

27 You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' 28 But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 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 that your whole body be thrown into hell. 30 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 that your whole body go into hell.

Now before I go into the text, having just alluded to "Pride Month," so-called "Pride Month," let me just remind you, those of you that are perhaps new to my ministry would not have reason to know, that I have a seven-part series on the Bible and transgenderism, and a five-part series on the Bible and homosexuality that are online, and to the extent that you would like to study those issues further, you've never really considered what Scripture has to say about those things, those would be good resources; I will pretty much presuppose those things in what I say here this evening.

But what Jesus is doing in this text is he is showing the true moral force of the seventh commandment. The seventh commandment in Exodus 20 verse 14 simply says, "You shall not commit adultery," and so Jesus is expounding the true force of that commandment, as we'll see as we go along. And so I want to start with the simple point that Jesus condemns lust. He condemns lust and the title of tonight's message is "Jesus on Lust," and we're going to see two basic points, how Jesus condemns lust and the cure that Jesus gives us for lust in this text that we have here.

And so when the Bible says that you shall not commit adultery, it raises the question, who is an adulterer? Well, let's hear what Jesus says about the matter. In verse 27, he says, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'" And what he's alluding to here, we've described this in the past and I'm not going to spend any more time on it here this evening, Jesus is quoting, in essence, not only the seventh commandment, but he is also giving a shorthand version of what the prevailing teaching was at the time that he was speaking to his Jewish audience in the first century, and what he is alluding to is the fact that the Pharisees limited the definition of this sin to the physical act of adultery itself and what Jesus is going to show is that that guts the law of God of its force. You cannot consider the sin of adultery simply by the act itself. And if you'll turn to Exodus 20, I want to show you why that is so plainly obvious even on the face of the Ten Commandments. In Exodus chapter 20, we read in verse 14, "You shall not commit adultery." And then if you go down just three verses later in verse 17, you'll realize that God said at the same time, he said, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife." The Ten Commandments apply to the heart sin of coveting. They apply to the heart sin of lust for a woman who is not your wife. But the Pharisees had marginalized all of that. They had set that to the side and thereby made it something where they satisfied, they met the law as they defined it. "I am not guilty of the physical act of adultery, and therefore I have a righteousness of my own."

Well, what they conveniently ignored was that God's command against adultery went much further than that, as shown in the tenth commandment against coveting, and so what Jesus is doing here in this passage is he is saying, "Here's what you know to be the case about the prevailing teaching on sexuality from your spiritual leaders. Now I'm going to tell you what it actually means." And he brings a moral force, a moral depth, a searching component to it that was unprecedented in the minds of his hearers, and what

he's doing here, he's not only bringing out the real meaning of the law, he is also contrasting his authority over against that of the Pharisees and he is establishing that Jesus Christ himself was the one true authority, he was the true interpreter of the law of God, because he was the law-giver himself as over against the Pharisees who held their position but did not hold the word of God. And so Jesus is bringing out his moral force and bringing out the moral interpretation of the law. Here's what I want you to see here, is that this text is confronting us and it confronts every man, woman, boy, and girl at two different levels, you could say. At one level, it confronts us with the real meaning of the law and how the law applies to the inner man and to the way that a man thinks and feels and desires and tells him what he can desire and what he cannot desire, it's really amazing, but it's also showing us, this text is confronting us with the authority of Jesus Christ. You cannot miss that and be able to understand the text because Jesus is contrasting his teaching with that of the scribes and Pharisees and he is setting forth his authority as over theirs and bringing forth the true meaning of this commandment against adultery.

And so when he says in verse 28, you see all of this right on the surface. He says, "You have heard that it was said," said by the Pharisees and their truncated version of teaching, but then he says, "But I say to you," but I say to you, "that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Before he ever touches the other man's wife, the sin of adultery has already occurred within his heart. And what he's describing here, he's describing an ongoing look, he's describing an intentional look, you might say, even better, an intentional look at a woman in order to fulfill an inner desire for provocation, let's say. He's referring to a purposeful gaze to seek to indulge a sexual desire rather than just noticing in passing that a woman is attractive, and so we can illustrate this biblically. When David was on his roof in 2 Samuel chapter 11, and he saw Bathsheba bathing, at some point he went from having noticed something unusual within his line of sight to forming desires and intentions in his heart, and you know what the sad outcome of that was. I don't need to go into it any further. The point is, is that long before his servants brought Bathsheba to his chamber, David had already committed adultery inside. He had set his heart on a path course, "I want this woman. I am going to pursue her," and the sin was already committed long before they came together.

And you see, beloved, the challenge of lust is this, is that it reveals the direction of your mind and heart. It tells you what you would do if you simply had the opportunity and the privacy to get away with it and so God and Christ here is making plain the fact that God is looking at the heart and judging the heart long before any physical action takes place. And so one writer says this, he says, "The commandment against adultery actually prohibits all impure thoughts and desires of the heart," and so God's standard is higher than anything the Pharisees had ever dreamed. He requires positive heart virtue, not mere external compliance. And so, for example, to just kind of make this plain, let's pretend that there's a young man who is somewhat moralistic in his leanings, and he has never crossed any lines in a physical way with a member of the opposite sex. He would be inclined to think with his moralistic meanings, with his moralistic leanings, I should say, that there's a measure of righteousness about him, especially in a society like ours in

which we live. He's separated himself out, he's a cut above the indulgent society in which he lives, overlooking the fact that his eyes go places that God would never have them to go. That young man is guilty of sin despite his external purity because of the things that he has engaged his eyes and his mind and his intentions and his desires with. That's what Jesus is saying and all of a sudden, all of a sudden we realize that this is a text that convicts every one of us. Who hasn't done that? Just even for one brief moment said, "That would be nice"? God looks at that and says the adulterer has made himself known, and the implications of this are enormous, beloved.

Arthur Pink says this, he says, "If lustful looking be so grievous a sin, then those who dress and expose themselves with the desire to be looked at and lusted after are not less but even more guilty, and this matter is only too often the case that men sin, but women tempt them to do so." End quote. And I realize I wanted to read that quote, even though Pink wrote decades ago, simply because there is this prevalent direction in our society to excuse women and say that women can dress however they want and the men don't have, you know, it's on the man, not on the woman, but God says it's on both of them.

And let me go further than this and put it on a more societal level, which I haven't done before on this text anyway. When we think about "Pride Month" and the way that all of this stuff gets crammed down our throats, and when we think about the fact that this is, you know, it's really just a month-long grooming campaign for, you know, that is perpetrated upon the ignorant, the young, and the unsuspecting, I want to say this, is that the politicians and the corporate executives who promote and profit from "Pride Month" will not escape the kind of fiery judgment that Jesus Christ is describing here in this text, nor will those social media overlords who silence dissent on the matter escape from it also. It matters not what other aspects of their life are, their active promotion of this month of sexual sin is guilty and brings condemnation upon themselves for their corporate participation in this. There's no evading this. Not only can you not commit the act of adultery without incurring guilt from God, you can't look with lust on it, and you cannot participate in the active promotion of that which brings other people into that realm of sin. And you say, "Well, if that's the case, then everybody's guilty," and that's precisely the point and the politicians and the corporate executives and all of those that are involved in this and all of the marketing campaigns, all of this, all of this falls under the umbrella of condemnation that Jesus gives here. We have to realize, we have to remember and we have to repeatedly assert and hold our ground on this, that this is not a month to be celebrated, this is a month to be mourned. This month, this annual tradition of "Pride Month," it should be for the church a call to mourning and repentance and intense prayer that God would bring repentance upon all of those that are involved with it. And everybody's in on it, everybody participates on it in such a way that you can only, if anyone has read their Bible, they can't help but think of Romans 1 in the process of it, you know, that those who approve of it are as guilty as those who participate in it.

And so, beloved, the word of God comes on a collision course against our culture, against our society, yes, but it also comes on a collision course against our own hearts. There's plenty of guilt and condemnation to go all around for all of us here, and I want to say this, beloved, if that sounds too strict, don't resist it. If it sounds too fantastic to think that there

is this worldwide participation in that which brings down the wrath and judgment of God, let Scripture speak for itself. Don't judge by human assessments. Don't judge according to human standards, but let the word of God speak and it actually becomes pretty plain. And so when Jesus speaks on sexual sin, he goes straight for the heart, you could say, and so that is his condemnation of lust, and we have other passages that we're going to look at in just a moment.

But for now I want to stick with the text and go to verses 29 and 30 where we see Jesus' cure for lust. We've seen his condemnation of lust. We see his cure for lust in what follows. Jesus was a very practical teacher at this point and he uses a sense of hyperbole to make his point. He has exposed what the standard is, it's a matter of heart desires as well as the external actions, and now he explains how to deal with sin. Look at verse 29 with me. He says, "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 that your whole body be thrown into hell." Now look, beloved, with all that I was saying in rather strong terms just a moment ago about the corporate and political participation in "Pride Month," and I say that this is a matter of eternal judgment and condemnation, that's simply the teaching of Christ right here. He goes from talking about lust in the heart to talking about being thrown into hell. That is a very serious connection and only a fool, and there are plenty of fools to go around, don't be one of them, don't be one of them, only a fool would not see that Jesus goes quite comfortably from lust into the heart to bodies in hell.

That's how seriously God takes this, and we're going to see it more in just a moment as we look at other texts from across the New Testament but here in verse 29, when Jesus says, "If your right eye causes you to sin," he's doing the same thing that he did on his teaching on anger. He switches to a singular pronoun. In English, you can use the pronoun "you" to refer to a plural audience, like you all, so to speak, or you can use it in a direct singular thing, you speaking to Tom, "Tom, you need to do this." In the original language you have singular and plural forms so you see the distinction clearly in the original language that isn't necessarily quite so obvious in English. Here in verse 29 he gets direct and personal with the singular pronoun. He's making the application personal. You should read this verse, forget everybody else around you, and say, "This is the Lord of creation speaking directly to me about situations in my life that he is holding me personally accountable for the teaching that I'm seeing here." It's really striking. He's speaking to you, not the crowd at large. Forget who's sitting by you, forget your children, forget your parents, and realize that Jesus is talking to you.

Now, when he says, "If your right eye causes you to sin," causes you to stumble, it says in other versions, it's expressing an ongoing pattern. If there's a habitual recurring sin in this area that you are experiencing, Jesus says it's time for you to take drastic action and to deal with it. The idea of causing you to sin or causing you to stumble, it has the idea of setting a trap. If there is a trap that you keep falling into and you recognize that and the Spirit of God through the word of God this evening is calling something to your mind and saying, "That's what I'm talking about," as the Spirit of God opens your understanding under the preaching of the word of God, here's what Jesus has to say for it. What he's doing is he is identifying that thing, that occasion, that relationship, that habit of reading

or exposure, that thing in your life that often leads you into temptation and sin. You don't need me to expound that for you, do you? You know what the Lord is talking about as he addresses your heart and what do you do when you come to this word and something like that comes to mind, Jesus says if something is causing you to sin, what do you do? It's not that difficult. You get rid of it. You get rid of it. And Jesus' point is this, is that if you would get rid of a literal eyeball that was making you to stumble, how much more would you get rid of something of lesser value in order to keep you in the path of righteousness in order to not have something that would suck you down into the painful punishment of eternal judgment?

Now, Jesus here is not commanding self-mutilation. People have understood it that way. It's obvious that that's not what he's talking about. He's not talking about literally taking a spoon and gouging your eyeball out, sorry to be so graphic, but rather he's not commanding self-mutilation, he's commanding self-control. Get control of your life. Get control of what you are doing and deal with it. One pastor says this, "Jesus is speaking of what we call spiritual mortification. Anything that stands between us and him must be ruthlessly torn out and thrown away. Drastic measures are always appropriate to protect one's spiritual health." End quote. That's what he's talking about, is that you take, when this sin, when you recognize these occasions to sin, you take drastic measures to deal with it. You don't wait. You don't excuse it. You deal with it. And the commands to tear it out and to throw it away from you are commands of urgency in the original language saying, "Do this and do it now! This is urgent, you cannot put this off!"

It's the same sense in the next verse, in verse 30, where Jesus says, "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 that your whole body go into hell." The idea is do it now. Take action immediately. It's the idea that when you find your eyes starting to focus on someone else, you turn your eyes away forcibly and say, "Lord, keep my mind pure." I remember having to grow in that as a young man and just forcibly turning my head away, saying, "Lord, keep my mind pure. Lord, don't let my mind go that way." And just the physical, forcible action of saying no and turning your head is part of what Jesus is saying here. Turn the computer off. Get up and walk away. Move away. Do something else. Stop it immediately. For some, and I'm not aware of anything like this in our congregation right now or we would be dealing with it directly, but I also know that I don't know what goes on in anyone's lives outside the walls of the church. If you're in a flirtatious relationship, you need to break that off yesterday. You need to break that off today. You need to do that right away. You need to block the number. You need to say, "Don't ever contact me again, this is over, and I'm walking away, and don't call me back." And my friends, don't say, "Well, I need to witness to them first." No, you're in a sinful, vulnerable position, and when you're standing on the ledge of falling off a cliff, get back away from it. Don't stand over there and look and say, "Man, I wonder what would happen if I fell there?" Break it off today. That is your God-given responsibility. Run away from the compromising situation like Joseph did. And tell someone, tell an elder, tell your spouse, tell someone that that's what you've done so that there's a sense that gets it out so that this sin cannot flourish like mold in the cover of darkness. That's how seriously you deal with it. You say, "Well, that'll be humiliating. I don't know what will happen if someone finds

out." So what? So what? Would you rather deal with some difficult consequences now with people that love you and spare your soul from hell, or would you rather hide it and cling to the relationship and then wake up in hell one day and have forever answered to you the question of whether it was worth it or not? Because it's not worth it.

And beloved, know for sure that your sins will find you out. They will. One of the gracious things that the Spirit of God has done in my heart over the decades is I just assume, I just assume that anything that I want to move in a direction whenever I've been tempted towards sin, I just immediately assume that this is going to be public knowledge if I go another step further. And by the grace of God, it's been enough to restrain my steps. Beloved, you will reap what you sow. God is not mocked on these things. You cannot successfully hide it and so what Jesus is saying is you take the initiative now to expose it, to end it, and not try to hide it because you're gambling with your soul when you do, and the thing about gambling is the odds are always guaranteed to make you lose over the long run.

You see, a true disciple embraces this teaching of Christ. There are three different things that he's embracing. A true disciple is embracing here. 1. He's embracing the authority of Christ. "I call you, Lord. You have the right to command me. I will obey what you say. I will cut this off. I will throw it away. I will get out from under this." Secondly, he is acknowledging the fact that the law of God applies to the heart itself, not simply his external actions. And thirdly, saying, "Yes, I will obey, I will do what's necessary to put this away, to honor Christ by my humble repentance."

Listen, beloved, there's no reason to talk about being a repentant Christian if you're not willing to forsake the sin of which Jesus speaks here. The consequences are too great. You married men, you married women, you have no business cultivating friendships with people of the opposite sex. There's no need for that. If it has gotten to the point of being flirtatious, it's just a matter of time before the consummation of it all comes. And if God in his grace has brought you to a point where you can recognize this and you see the danger of it, now tonight is the time to get out before it goes any further and you destroy everything else about your life. I remember many, many years ago, before Nancy and I even met, having an older friend and I was in his presence with his wife when he started talking about this friendship that he had developed with another woman and how he loved this other woman but he was going to stay married to his wife. What a travesty. Claimed to be a Christian, I don't know where his soul is now. But beloved, these things of adultery, here's what you have to understand, these things of adultery go beyond the physical act. Jesus is talking about more than just what you do with your eyes. There is an emotional and a relational fidelity that is required by the marriage relationship that you're not only physically committed to one another and exclusive to one another, you are emotionally exclusive to one another as well, and the professing Christian man or woman who does not practice that kind of vigilant, diligent exclusivity is someone who needs to examine their hearts as to whether they're saved or not.

Now look, I understand that most people prefer someone to speak soothing, stroking things to them, but the person, it's been said, the person who loves you most is the person

who tells you the most truth, and the fact that this is uncomfortable, the fact that this violates your space if it does, it's simply an indication that that space needs to be violated. You see, beloved, the Christian sees lust as an enemy to destroy. The Christian sees a flirtatious relationship as something to be immediately forsaken, not to be coddled. Whatever, beloved, whatever exposes your soul to unholy desires must be obliterated. It must be ruthlessly set aside and slaughtered as when the prophet hacked Agag to pieces in the famous message that John MacArthur preached to that extent.

Now beloved let me say a couple of words about a particular, for just by way of pastoral help and pastoral encouragement and direction here, thinking about our young people in particular. Collectively as a church, it is essential for us to be sympathetic and prayerful for the young people in our midst as they fight this battle. Everything is arrayed against them in a way that is far beyond what it was like when I was a teenager and a young man. That's longer ago than I care to remember, let's not go there. We need to be sympathetic and prayerful and help them. When people come out of an immoral lifestyle into our church, we need to embrace them. We need to sit down and talk with them and help them. When they're saying, "I'm trying to come out, I want to come out of this. I want to leave behind that lifestyle." It is a great privilege of our church to be able to encourage people like that, to say, "Yes, we love you. Yes, Christ can give you strength. Yes, there is forgiveness in the cross of Jesus Christ." And to assure them and strengthen them as they take steps in that direction, not to stand aloof and apart with a sense of self-righteousness that, "You're guilty of sins that I haven't committed." Like I like to say, they may come in with sins that they've committed, but you know, that you haven't committed, but you know what? They haven't committed the sins you've committed either.

Let me also say this about the source of victory, and I've said this before; this is nothing new to people familiar with my ministry. The answer to lusts and computer pornography problems and all of that, the answer to that is not accountability partners or internet software. If someone is willing to lie to God, it's not going to be a problem for them to lie to an accountability partner. Someone will rebel against God, it's no deal at all to violate an accountability partner's trust. We just need to realize that what Scripture says is the fear of God is what keeps us from evil. If someone is engaged in sexual sin on an ongoing basis, it is a mark of a lack of the fear of God and you have to go to the heart issue of that rather than putting a band-aid on the terminal tumor and say, "Well, let me get you an accountability partner." The answer's not internet software either, beloved. I don't care if people want to use that, but it's just not an answer. You know, people know how to circumvent technology. People know how to redirect it. They know how to get cash devices, burn devices, to evade all of that. And so what we have to do and what Jesus is teaching us quite explicitly here is we have to realize that these are matters of the heart that have to be addressed by Scripture in the power of the Holy Spirit. Anything external can't get to the heart of the matter, and if we as a Christian church sacrifice that principle simply for the sake of selling software, we have really forsaken our calling. Like I say, I don't mind the software. I've got friends in that industry. I love them. I support them. But we just have to realize that biblical counseling, I mean counseling for my sin problem, you know, "I've got an accountability partner. I've got internet software,"

you can do all of that junk, you can do all of that junk and be postponing and ignoring the true issue of the fear of God and real repentance and spiritual mortification that Jesus calls hope for here. Don't talk to me about your biblical counseling, don't talk to me about your internet software if you're not willing to cut it off and throw it away like Jesus says. That we've got cottage industries in Christianity designed to enable people to sin, I don't want any part of it and you shouldn't either.

Now, Christians like us, especially in this world, in many of our families, in the broader realm of the Christian church, I've told you before, I haven't looked at this for a few years in John Piper's ministry, but "Desiring God" had prominent articles arguing that homosexual desire was not sinful. You can engage the desire, just don't engage in the act. That's lethal false teaching to say things like that. It's not true because, beloved, you must understand the very point that Jesus is teaching here in verses 21 through 48 is that God requires a heart righteousness. That's the major point through here and no one can legitimately desire that which God forbids. You cannot desire adultery and be safe from sin because you don't commit the act. No, that doesn't work because God forbids the desire itself. It does no good to say, "Well, I'm a Christian and I'm a homosexual but I'm celibate." You cannot identify as that which God condemns as an abomination. See, ultimately, ultimately, beloved, all of this comes down to a question of the authority of Christ and the authority of Scripture, and to the extent that we want to make excuses and round off the corners of Scripture so that we can fit more comfortably into this wicked society that celebrates pride, something's terribly wrong with Christians that want to do that and we're not doing any favors to the lost by trying to accommodate them. We need to make these things clear so that people understand what's at stake and that the choices are stark and this calls for a decision of life direction and life import and life commitment that you cannot stand in both camps. You cannot straddle the fence. You're either with Christ or you're against him.

Now, let me vindicate the vehemence with which I have just spoken. Let me justify what I have just said. Let me show you from Scripture why the matter is so urgent. Turn first of all to 1 Corinthians chapter 6. I alluded to Romans 1 earlier. We won't turn there. Romans 1:24 to 32; you need to be familiar with that text if you're not. Beloved, I just want you to look at and let it sink in how often Scripture speaks against sexual sin. I realize that people love to refer to biblical Christians as prudes and all of that but, beloved, the mocking is ultimately against the word of God itself, because the word of God is so explicit on this so many times, starting with the Ten Commandments, and even earlier than that, but preeminently featured in the Ten Commandments throughout the Old Testament, and then you come to the New Testament, you come to the New Testament and you see the biblical writers talking about this over and over again in the most starkest of terms of what the consequences are. How a man in ministry, how a pulpit could not warn about this is beyond me. How you could gloss over this in the world in which we live is unconscionable.

1 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 9, "do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived." It's like Paul says, "There will be deception on this very point, so don't let that deception suck you in." "Do not be deceived: neither the

sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." Those who practice such things in an unrepentant way, those who refuse to tear it out and throw it away, they're not going to heaven. There's only one other alternative, and it ain't good.

Drop down to verse 18, "Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body." Flee from sexual immorality. In what sense is a person a Christian that can read that and doesn't respond?

Look at Galatians chapter 5 in this connection. Galatians chapter 5, verse 19. And beloved, it's not simply the list and the itemization of sexual sin that I want you to see, it's the consequences that are uniformly stated about sexual sin. Verse 19, "Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these." Not an exhaustive list, representative, things like these. Paul says, "I warn you, as I warned you before," this is a repeated warning, "that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." They won't.

Look at Ephesians chapter 5, just keep turning page by page in your New Testament. Ephesians chapter 5, beginning in verse 3. Ephesians chapter 5, verse 3, we read, "But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. For you may be sure of this, that everyone," everyone, "who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." Because of these things. What things? The list that he was just given, headlined by sexual immorality. Because of sexual immorality, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Look at Colossians chapter three. Colossians chapter 3 verse 5. I'll give you a moment to turn there. I'm in no hurry tonight. "Put to death therefore what is earthly in you." Doesn't that just sound like the same kind of language that Jesus said? Put these things to death. Tear it out, throw it away, deal with this urgently because eternity is at stake in the way that you respond to these things. Put to death what is earthly in you, headlined by sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. "On account of these, the wrath of God is coming."

It's almost like God means what he's saying and listen as I read Hebrews 13:4, you don't need to turn there. Hebrews 13:4, "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous."

Beloved, there's nowhere to run, there's nowhere to hide on these urgent matters. This is life and death, this is heaven and hell. We cannot, it should be obvious by now, we cannot identify with the world on these things. We must step apart from them and step apart not only in rejecting "Pride Month," but rejecting your own sins to the point of taking action to put them away. And I just feel compelled to just say one more time, you know, I never know, you never know what the Spirit's using when you speak in times like this, but I feel compelled to say this one more time, that anyone claiming to be a Christian that is in a flirtatious relationship with someone, not their spouse, is in mortal, mortal danger and it is incumbent upon you to cut that off tonight and not wait until morning. Maybe it's not flirtatious in an immediate sense, it's just something online, same thing, same principle. God is not mocked. We are not to trifle with these things.

Now beloved, turn back to Matthew chapter 6 and let me just remind you, if your spirit is overwhelmed with conviction at a time like this, good. If you're so uncomfortable because it's so pressing on your mind, good, that's a good thing. The question is what to do with it and Jesus invites us to come to him in prayer, even in this self-same sermon on the mount in Matthew chapter 6. Let these words jump off the page to you as much as the other ones did about your sexual sin. Jesus calls us, commands us, says, "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors." To go to Jesus like the tax collector in Luke 18 and just cry out, "Lord, be merciful to me, the sinner! I'm so overwhelmed by the recognition of my sin that I don't know what to say or what to do. I simply come to you and I come to the cross for grace and mercy and forgiveness and that you would give me the strength and wisdom to do what I need to do, which is what you said, tear it off and throw it away. Be merciful to my soul and, Lord," this is the only way a prayer like that is sincere, "Lord, help me to bring forth the fruit of true repentance."

We should embrace the way that the Lord's word has humbled us here this evening and look humbly, repentantly to Christ and to thank him for a word that cuts through the chaos of the world and the rebellion of our heart. God has done this to us this evening, beloved, in love. God has brought this conviction to us in a spirit of love because he would spare us the judgment to come for the sake of repentance and forgiveness now. Today is the day to repent. Today is the day of salvation. Today is the day to take seriously that one more time the hands of Jesus are extended to you, calling you to repentance and faith in him.

Let's pray together.

Father, we thank you for your word and for the Spirit that helps us to understand it. I pray, Father, for each one in need of bringing forth the fruit of repentance tonight, that you would give them the grace to not let this simply be a passing moment of conviction, but one that brings genuine lifelong change and a willingness even to come forward and to talk to one of the elders to say, that's what I needed to do, that's what I need to do. Father, help those that are seeking to walk in righteousness. Oh, the pitfalls are so many and so around us, Father, would you please guard the steps of your dear children? Would you lead them in the paths of righteousness for your name's sake? And for our young people, Father, for our young men, for the young women, those that are lonely and

those that have taken wrong means to try to satisfy the emptiness of their heart, would you be gracious to them and lead them to Christ and make this a real turning point, a real time of decision for truth and righteousness in their lives that will bear fruit from this day forth and forevermore. We thank you for a Lord who loved us, who gave his life on the cross for sinners just like us, that there is no sinner too guilty that they can't come to Christ. Christ receives repentant sinners. He does so gladly. He welcomes them. Father, may there be some that find that welcome even now in response to your word tonight. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.

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