



Matthew 5:27-32

# RIGHTEOUSNESS IN OUR SEXUALITY

*The real trouble with the Pharisees and scribes was that they had never read the Ten Commandments properly. If they had truly considered and studied them, they would have seen that you cannot take each one in isolation. ...The apostle Paul, in his striking statement in Romans 7, confesses that he himself had been guilty of that very error. He says that it was when he realized that the law said, "Thou shalt not covet," that he began to understand the meaning of lust. Before that he had been thinking of the law in terms of action only; but the law of God does not stop at mere action, it says, "Thou shalt not covet." The law had always stressed the importance of the heart... Our Lord, therefore, is anxious to stress that important truth and to impress it upon His followers.*

—D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

## The Purpose of the Sermon on the Mount:

1. To characterize the true nature of a kingdom citizen.
2. To confront people with the righteousness of God.
3. To call people to a life submitted to Jesus, the King.

## Preliminary Thoughts on a Difficult Passage:

- All of us \_\_\_\_\_ of God's perfect righteousness as revealed in the Sermon on the Mount (5:48; cf. Romans 3:23).
- As believers, we are called to \_\_\_\_\_ God's righteousness through the power of the Holy Spirit (6:33; cf. Romans 8:1-4).
- God's righteousness is the \_\_\_\_\_ to true happiness. We are to obey God's commands not because of the severity of the law but because of the joy of holiness (5:3-10; cf. Ps. 16:11).
- Sexuality is such a difficult topic because it is such a beautiful, powerful and sacred \_\_\_\_\_ of God (19:6; cf. Gen. 2:24).

## THE SCRIBES' INTERPRETATION (5:27)

"You shall not commit adultery" is the seventh commandment (Ex. 20:13). The scribes taught that the act of adultery was wrong but often ignored the command against coveting and lust (Ex. 20:17).

## THE KING'S DECLARATION (5:28)

*But I say to you  
that whoever looks at a woman  
to lust for her  
has already committed adultery with her  
in his heart.*

*The happy state of matrimony is undoubtedly the surest and most lasting foundation of comfort and love, the cause of all good order in the world, and what preserves it from the utmost confusion.*

—Benjamin Franklin

*True holiness is a state of delight.*

—Jon Bloom

*Sex is the closest that many people ever come to a spiritual experience. Indeed, it is because it is a spiritual experience of sorts that so many chase after it with a repetitive, desperate kind of abandon. Often, whether they know it or not, they are searching for God.*

—Dr. M. Scott Peck

*Sex is perhaps the most powerful God-created way to help you give your entire self to another human being... So according to the Bible, a covenant is necessary for sex... If you have sex outside of marriage, you will have to steel yourself against sex's power to soften your heart toward another person and make you more trusting... Ironically, then, sex outside of marriage eventually works backwards, making you less able to commit and trust another person.*

—Timothy Keller

## THE DISCIPLES' APPLICATION (5:29-30)

- Sin is more \_\_\_\_\_ than we realize.
- Sin is more \_\_\_\_\_ than we realize.
- Defeating sin requires more \_\_\_\_\_ action than we realize (cf. Romans 6:11; 8:13; 13:14; 1 Corinthians 6:18).

*The beauty and sanctity of marriage is not only threatened by lust in the heart but also by using divorce as a way of legalizing lust.*

## THE SCRIBES' INTERPRETATION (5:31)

The scribes' teaching on divorce focused on Deuteronomy 24:1-4:

- They turned a *secondary* passage into the *primary* one.
- They turned a *permission* for divorce into a *command*.
- They focused on the *legality* of the divorce rather than on its *legitimacy* in the eyes of God (cf. Malachi 2:13-16).

## THE KING'S DECLARATION (5:32)

*But I say to you*

*whoever divorces his wife for any reason*

*except sexual immorality*

*makes her the victim of adultery*

*and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.*

## THE DISCIPLES' APPLICATION

- Sex is a good gift, designed by God for one man and one woman, in the security of a lifelong marriage covenant.
- Sexual sin—no matter how I may justify it—harms myself, the other person, and the sacred oneness of marriage.
- Because of the reality of sin, God allows divorce in certain cases where one partner willfully violates the marriage bond.
- God loves. God saves. God forgives. God cleanses. God heals.

**Causes you to sin.** Greek, *skandalizo*, "to entrap; trip up; entice to sin." Originally used to describe the "bait stick in a trap."

*Be killing sin or sin will be killing you.* —John Owen (1616-83)

*Divorce is permitted if she burns his soup.* —Rabbi Hillel (1<sup>st</sup> cent BC)

*Divorce is permitted if he finds another more beautiful than she.* —Rabbi Akiva (AD 50-135)

**Sexual immorality.** Grk, *porneia*, "any kind of illicit sexual sin."

*We have courtesans for pleasure; we have concubines for the sake of daily cohabitation; we have wives for the purpose of having children legitimately and of having a faithful guardian for all our household affairs.*

—Demosthenes (384-322 BC)

*The one who is divorcing without the cause of fornication is making his wife to suffer adultery. He has broken his vows to her to care for her... The woman is treated like a piece of property that has received the stamp "DEFECTIVE," when in fact, it is the "stamper" who is morally defective.*

—William Luck  
[bible.org/byverse/Matthew%205](http://bible.org/byverse/Matthew%205)

In a society where only men held the power of divorce, Jesus takes that power out of their hands. Jesus only gives the possibility of divorce if the wife willfully violates the marriage bond through illicit sexual behavior (Mk. 10:12). Thus, a godly man (avoiding adultery) married to a faithful wife (avoiding *porneia*) would have no valid reason for divorce.