

Heart-Adultery!

ORAL JEWISH TRADITION says that Rabbi Gidal and Rabbi Jochanan were accustomed to sitting at “the place of dipping” where the Jewish women would come to wash themselves. When someone admonished them they were in danger of lasciviousness [sexual arousal], Rabbi Jochanan answered, “I am of the seed of Joseph, over whom an evil affection could not rule.” This religious leader either believed he was above it all, had no emotions while watching women bathe or he pretended to be spiritual and above it all. Today, our world has a more direct point of view - it does not matter what I do as long as I do not hurt or offend another person. That is a godless, self-centered, self-focused view. Our holy God, Jesus Christ, has already spoken on this topic,

You have heard that it was said, “YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY”; but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart. (NASB) Matthew 5:27-28

YOU HAVE HEARD. The Jewish leaders had distorted the law, so it is no surprise that Jesus desired to correct their false teaching. Jesus did not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). This included correcting their error. Jesus has just finished telling the crowd their spiritual leaders were not very righteous (Matthew 5:20). Their pattern of life was modeling the road to hell! It sounds like some of our spiritual leaders today. There is a statement among Christian leaders that says, “We live in a glass fish bowl, and all it takes is one rock to shatter it.” The rock is sin, and the glass bowl is one’s area of ministry. All that is needed is one significant, public sin - a rock - and one’s ministry can be destroyed. Many Christian leaders today struggle with sin on the inside, and are afraid to tell anyone because they fear the rock. They are like the religious leaders of Jesus’ day - focusing on the outward appearance! Jesus has just told the crowd that God “throws rocks” when He sees anger, lust, greed, hatred, or other sins in our heart.

Jesus is not finished. I am sure the religious leaders wished He were. But His next topic starts by quoting the seventh commandment, “You shall not commit adultery.” The Greek word for adultery, MOICHEUO, means “to adulterate,” “to commit adultery,” and “to be or to allow oneself to be

seduced.” External adultery was considered a grievous wrong and sin amongst the Jews.

BUT I SAY. But they missed the point, so Jesus responds with a very strong statement. In the Greek, He emphasizes the fact that He is speaking and says, “I say!” and adds,

. . . that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart. (NASB) Matt. 5:28

The picture Jesus paints is of a man who is looking and looking at a woman to sexually desire her. The woman could be a real live, warm woman who is nearby or walking far away, or a woman in a magazine or on the television or in the movies. Jesus’ illustration could have been about a woman longing for a man too! Some women sexually long for a man whom they consider to be very spiritual. Many women sin when they read romance novels. Jesus is not talking about a physical act, but desire in the heart.

Why do we start looking and sometimes desire someone else? Because we already have adultery in our heart. We are sinners, and sin in anyone’s heart is still sin. Adultery starts in the heart and results in an outward act. We can appear

holy to others, look great, be nice to others, and be lusting after the man or woman a few feet away. It is the heart that God cares about. Ten chapters later Jesus says our outward actions are the result of sin in our own hearts,

For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries . . . (NASB) Matt. 15:11, 19

We may fool those around us, but we cannot hide our lust from Him because He “examines our hearts” (1 Thess 2:4),

. . . God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” (NASB) 1 Samuel 16:7

In my counseling experience, I have discovered that sexual sins appear to result in more heart-pain than other sins. 1 Corinthians 6:19 tells us why.

Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. (NASB) 1 Corinthians 6:19

Did you catch the phrase, “against his own body”? “You will not commit adultery,” is a divine principle that God has put in our hearts - to be faithful to your spouse. And violation causes tremendous inner pain!

King David is an example of pain in the heart. 2 Samuel 11:2 tells us that David arose from bed and went up to the roof of the palace and walked around. Why he did this is not clear. Had he seen her before? It was evening and Bathsheba may have assumed it was safe to bathe on the roof - escaping the hot house. Anyway, David finds her and apparently stares at her. The Hebrew suggests she was exceptionally beautiful. He looked and looked again. His emotions captured him. What followed was adultery with Bathsheba, the

death of her husband, Uriah, the death of their child, and great mourning. What heart pain!

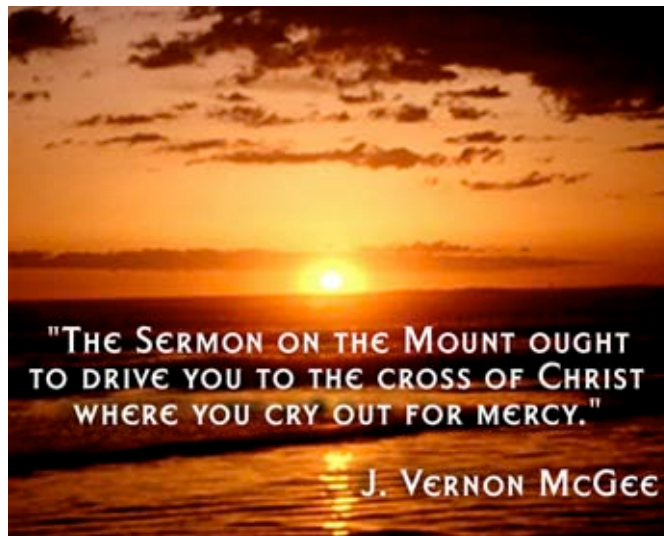
Many people believe that they can look and not sin. But the Holy Spirit says,

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. (NASB) James 1:14-15

David looked at Bathsheba and he was tempted. Lust pulled on him to look some more.

WAS JESUS SERIOUS? How serious is Jesus about heart-lust? He is very serious. He tells us to gouge out our right eye and cut off our right hand if they cause sin in our heart

(Matt. 5:29-30). Why did Jesus use talk about the eyes and hands? We understand the idea of looking with our eyes. Was Jesus also thinking about touching with our hands, hugging one another, brushing against someone, the close encounter, or the lingering touch? But Jesus does not really mean that we are to cut off our hand or remove our eye because when we



look left or right, both of our eyes move together. If Jesus was serious, He would have urged us to gouge out both eyes. He did not. Jesus was making a point - do whatever you have to do to flee sin.

REMOVING EYES AND HANDS. Many men and women struggle in this area and search the scriptures for help. Here are some biblical principles that help us “remove our eyes and hands.”

Principle #1: Joseph provides a well known biblical example of how to respond - run.

And . . . his master’s wife looked with desire at Joseph, and

she said, "Lie with me." . . . And he left his garment in her hand and fled, and went outside. (NASB) Genesis 39:7, 12

This was Job's principle.

I have made a covenant with my eyes; How then could I gaze at a virgin? (NASB) Job 31:1

and the Holy Spirit affirms it,

Now flee from youthful lusts, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. (NASB) 2 Tim. 2:22

and Jesus said if you have to, gouge out your eye and cut off your hand. The principle is clear - **FLEE!** Flee every situation that has proven to be lustful for you. Do not go back! If it is the movies, flee them. If it is romance books, stop reading them. Ephesians 5:12 says,

. . . it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. (NASB) Eph. 5:12

Do not go to the beach if you have trouble looking at half-clothed men or women. Do not follow the example of Rabbi Gidal and Rabbi Jochanan. For some, this will feel like you are removing your eyes and cutting off your hands.

Principle #2: If you are married, do not deprive your spouse of physical relations. 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 tells husbands and wives to freely give their bodies to each other,

Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. **Stop depriving one another . . .** (NASB) 1 Cor. 7:3-5

The Holy Spirit is telling each husband, that his body belongs to his wife. And wife, your body belongs to your husband. Apparently, some Christian husbands and wives

did not want to share physical relations with their partners.

Most people think this is a great passage for husbands. We miss the fact that many wives are starving for physical relations too! Some years ago, I was counseling a wife who was lusting after men because her husband denied her physical relations. She was struggling. This is an issue not just for husbands, but for wives too! Wife, say yes to your husband. Husband, say yes to your wife.

Principle #3: Do not just avoid - **PURSUE**. This is the advice the Holy Spirit gives in 2 Timothy 2:22 - pursue holiness. And Matthew 5:6 tells us to pursue righteousness that satisfies. Lust does not provide lasting satisfaction. How do we do this? We must confess our sins every time we fail (1 John 1:9). Second, we need to spend as much time as we can in His Word (Col. 3:16). Spend hours and hours every day if you really struggle - be absorbed. Third, we need to ask the Holy Spirit to fill us - to take control of our lives every day (Eph. 5:17-18) - this is God's will for our lives. Fourth, show your thankfulness to God for His forgiveness. And finally, pray, asking God to protect you.

Principle #4: You may even want to start asking others to pray with you about your struggles. If you are really serious about holiness in this area of your life, open up to someone.

CONCLUSION. Many men and women struggle in this area. I have counseled men who are weary in the struggle and feel terrible about themselves. Many feel rejected by God. If you are struggling, follow the principles outlined here and remember that God loves you,

"Come now, and let us reason together," Says the LORD, "Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool. (NASB) Isaiah 1:18