

# Meeting With Christ

---

Practical and Exegetical Studies on the Words of Jesus Christ

Yves I-Bing Cheng, M.D., M.A.

Based on sermons of Pasteur Eric Chang

www.meetingwithchrist.com

## THOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY

---

### Matthew 5:27-30

I would like to invite you to turn to the teaching of our Lord Jesus in Matthew 5:27-30. This is what Jesus says on the matter of adultery.

*Matthew 5:27. You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.'  
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.*

*29 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.*

*30 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.*

Here the Lord Jesus says, 'If anybody looks at a woman so as to possess her in a lustful sort of way, that person has already committed adultery with her in his heart.' The Seventh Commandment says that you shall not commit adultery. Now, what is adultery? It is only the physical act? Or does adultery begin in your heart?

### A matter of the heart

It is not hard to understand that no sin would have been committed if it were not already present in the heart of the person. As James says, it is the desire within us that gives birth to sin (James 1:15). So sin always starts in the heart.

Sin is a matter of the heart because whether we commit a sin or not is a matter of opportunity. We may not have the opportunity to commit a sin but it does not mean that we will not commit that sin if we were faced with that opportunity. The fact that you did not commit a sin may simply prove that you did not have the occasion to commit it. But granted the occasion, you might have done so because the sinful desire was already there in your heart.

I often think of the crimes committed during a war and I am appalled at what is being done sometimes. Soldiers go to a foreign country and they behave like animals. Every manner of sin is committed, sometimes for no other reason than the pleasure and the satisfaction of doing evil. Are these soldiers worse than anyone else? In their own country, do they commit more crimes than anyone else? Not at all. What society had prevented them from doing, the fear of the police, the fear of people's criticism, the fear that the society might turn against you, all that prevented a lot of sins from being committed. But take away these social pressures, remove the restrictions of the law, and then see

what happens. You dare not think what you would be capable of doing. Everybody becomes like wild animals.

This is the sad reality of sin in the heart of man and the Lord Jesus tells us that God looks into the heart of man. He is saying, 'Don't think that God waits for you to actually commit adultery before He judges you. The moment the thought of adultery is conceived in your heart, you have already sinned before God. You are as every bit as guilty of adultery as the person who actually committed it. Because if you were given the opportunity to do it, you would do it. Don't deceive yourself.'

### **Looking at a woman**

Now, if this is so, does it mean that every time you look at a woman and you happen to like her look, you have already committed sin? And I don't think that this statement is addressed only to the men. If a girl looks at a boy and notices that he is a handsome guy, is she guilty of sin? Is that what the Lord Jesus is saying? If that's the case, I think that it would be better for all of us to be blind.

Look carefully at this verse, v. 28. ... *whoever looks at a woman to lust for her...* We have here in the Greek what is a present participle. This means that there is a continuous looking, a gazing at the person. It is not just one glimpse. If you see a girl and finds that she is pretty, or you look at a boy and notices that he is handsome, that's not what is involved. We are talking about this kind of gazing, this kind of looking at a person or a picture with a lustful intent. The expression of intention is important to mention. It is looking intently with a view, with the purpose of lusting after her. That's the way a person looks at pornographic material.

So the Lord Jesus is talking about the attitude of sin, that sin is of the heart. Don't think that because you hide a sin in your heart and that you don't actually commit it that you shall not be judged for it. The Lord Jesus wants us to know that sin is of the heart. If there is a sinful thought that you nourish, that you harbor, that you enjoy, Jesus tells us that God will hold you to account for your thoughts.

Here we see the standard of purity, of righteousness, that the Lord Jesus requires of His disciples. Remember what He said about the purity of heart in the Sermon on the Mount. *Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.* Now He is telling us what 'purity of heart' means. 'Purity of heart' means that you do not harbor sin in your heart. It means that you do not nourish sinful thoughts in your heart.

Because the Bible tells us in Proverb 23:7, *As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.* That means to say, if you nourish those thoughts, one of these days, if you are given the opportunity to do it, you are going to do it. And you will have to face the consequences of your actions.

### **The seriousness of sin**

How serious is this matter? The Lord Jesus says this. 'If there is sin in your heart, you've got to act so sternly and drastically about it that if you have to take out an eye, or chop off a hand, it is better that you do that than to have your whole body going to hell.'

What is the Lord Jesus saying? Is He saying literally to take a knife and gouge out your eye and chop off your hand? If that's the teaching of our Lord, I think that we shall all be crippled before we ever get to the end of this life. For who has never had a sinful thought passing through his mind?

Can you think of the pain that you will have to endure to take out an eye? In those days, there was no medication to dull your pain. Gouging out your eye... It almost makes you feel sick just to think about. And how about chopping off your hand with no painkiller? Do you see what Jesus is

getting at? No matter what pain is involved, see to it that you do not commit sin because there is nothing more important in this world that you should be saved. Sin is such an issue for God that if you have to take drastic measures, no matter the suffering, then even so it would be worth doing.

Imagine, losing one eye. What a loss! We have the expression, 'I would give my right eye for it', to mean that the eye is something very precious to us. Or, you lose your right hand. You are crippled! You are finished! For the people in those days, if they are missing their right hand, they can't work anymore. Their livelihood is gone. Do you see that not only the concept of suffering is expressed here, but the concept of the loss of everything is involved also. And the Lord Jesus is saying, 'It is better to endure all this suffering, to lose all that you have, than to go to hell.' Do you have this understanding of salvation?

## **Mortification**

Now let's go deeper. I mentioned the concept of suffering and also the concept of the loss of everything. Here is a third one: the concept of self-discipline, and particularly, the discipline of the body. Know that our spiritual growth, our sanctification, is closely tied up with the discipline of the body. That our body, with its lusts, its desires, must be brought under subjugation.

Paul speaks about that in 1 Corinthians 9:27 where he writes, ... *I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.* So Paul is saying, 'I bring my body into slavery. I subjugate my body. I give my body black eyes. Discipline your eyes, discipline your hands, so that by using them, you do not commit sin.'

You know, if we cannot conquer our body, if we cannot have the victory over our self, our greed, our lust, how are we going to fight this spiritual battle? Understand clearly that the victory in spiritual battle begins with the victory over self and over the flesh. That is why Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:27 that 'I bring my body into slavery.' And he says the same thing in Galatians 5:24, in Colossians 3:5, in Romans 8:13.

*Galatians 5:24. And those who are Christ's have **crucified the flesh** with its passions and desires.*

*Colossians 3:5. Therefore **put to death your members** which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.*

*Romans 8:13. For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you **put to death the deeds of the body**, you will live.*

In all these places, he speaks of mortifying the deeds of the flesh. That means to say, you bring the deeds of the flesh to death. You do not allow them to find any expression in you.

So discipline your eye so that you do not look at what you are not supposed to look. Behave as if you have actually plucked out your eyes, as if you were blind. Discipline your hand so that you do not touch what you are not supposed to touch. Behave as if you had cut off your hand. That is what Jesus is talking about, not mutilation but mortification, cutting out of our lives the things that cause us to sin.

This mortification of the deeds of the flesh cannot be accomplished unless you have the Holy Spirit in you. As human beings, we lack the ability to kill sin. That is why Paul says in Romans 8:13, ... *if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if **by the Spirit** you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.* It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we can achieve true mortification of any lust. But it is our responsibility to invite the Holy Spirit and to prepare the ground on which the work of mortification will be accomplished. And this cannot be done if your eyes are still staring at a woman.

## **Beyond sexual purity**

So here in Matthew 5:27, the Lord Jesus is talking about the sin of adultery, physical adultery as well as heart adultery. Now put yourself in the shoes of the Jews who were listening to Jesus. Every Jew knew that under the OT law, the penalty for the sin of adultery was death (Leviticus 20:10), usually by stoning. For that kind of sin, there was no sacrifice in the temple to save you. The sentence was death. And the Lord Jesus is saying that if you commit such a sin, you are going down to hell. If you commit adultery, whether physically or in your heart, you are already sentenced to hell. That is the standard of justice that God requires.

And if you follow the teaching of the Lord Jesus, you will see that later in the gospel of Matthew, Jesus will use again this dramatic metaphor of plucking out your eye and cutting off your hand and will apply it not just to sexual sin, but to any kind of sin. Let me read to you Matthew 18:8-9.

*Matthew 18:8. If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire.*

*9 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.*

You see that this is the same teaching than what the Lord Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount except that here, the principle has a wider application than to a sexual purity.

## **Sin leads to a dead end**

Do you see the implication of all this? Apply this principle to yourself. What is going to happen to us in the light of eternity? If Jesus is telling the truth, are we not all already condemned to hell? Is it not clear then that there is no living person who can avoid the disaster of hell? Is there anybody here who can say, 'I never committed sin in my thoughts'? Think of the sins you have already committed in your body, never mind the things that you did in your mind. Then how, how is any living person going to be justified under the teaching of Jesus? We are all finished!

You see that this teaching of the Lord Jesus brings out the whole question of salvation. It sets a standard such that no living man, no flesh can be justified before God. Don't you see then that in the light of this teaching that the Lord Jesus is giving, Paul is saying exactly what Jesus is saying, that *all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23)? From the spiritual point of view, we are all finished. We are all condemned men, condemned men because the only future awaiting us is hell. Is there any way we can be saved?

Now you can see that the Lord's teaching presupposes and establishes the need for salvation. It establishes the need for the forgiveness of sin, which we are unable for ourselves to achieve. Here it says, 'Don't commit sin.' But it doesn't say what to do if we have already committed it. What are we going to do?

Thanks be to God that He has told us elsewhere what to do. We are to repent. The Lord Jesus started His ministry with the words, *Repent for the kingdom of God is at hand*. That was the first sentence in the teaching of the Lord Jesus.

But you might have this objection. There is no use to repent because this sin has no forgiveness under the OT law. Adultery is punishable by death. There is no sacrifice to cover it. So what's the use of repenting? True, the OT could not save you. But thanks be to God that it is not the end of the story for the Lord Jesus says in Mark 10:45 that the Son of Man has come *to give His life a*

*ransom for many.* He came precisely to save you from hell. And every time we take communion, it is to remind us that if it were not for His body and for His blood, all of us would end up in hell. Take that thought to you every time you come to communion. 'If it were not for this body, Lord, if it were not for this blood, I would be going right down to hell and spend all eternity in destruction.'

## **Hell: a place of justice**

From all this, we begin to see how God looks at sin. We realize the terribleness of sin, the fearfulness of sin. God, in His holiness, will have no choice but to confine you to hell if you persist in sin. This universe of God is meant to be sinless and He is going to remove every stain of sin, you can be sure of that. And if you hang on to sin, He will have no choice but to remove you with all the sin. That's what Jesus means by having *your whole body to be cast out into hell.*

The reality of hell is something fearful. No one should teach or preach about it without a sense of the pain, the horror and the fearfulness of hell. You know, God, in His wisdom, uses two languages to talk about the spiritual world: the language of love and the language of fear. And when you talk about hell, you are using the language of fear.

And I thank God that there is a hell. You heard it right. I thank God that there is a hell. I say this in all humility, with fear and trembling. I tell you why. If there is no hell, there would be no justice in this world. Think of all the evil that is being done in this world and people get away from the human court. There must be some way to settle the accounts. I think of all the people who suffered because of man's sinful actions, and when the criminals were able to escape the judgment of men. Where is justice?

From time to time, we hear of someone who, after killing many people, he kills himself. Do you think that there is justice, that this man, having caused such misery and wretchedness to the families of the victims, should escape like that with just one shot in his head? Would you say that there is justice? If people are suffering because of his action, then he must suffer at least as much as these people.

But I thank God that there is an ultimate place of justice in this world, that God will set the account. Every man will have his share. No man will escape the judgment of God. And I will praise God because justice, as inadequate as my understanding of justice is, would have been fulfilled.

## **Killing the body and the soul in hell**

You know, if a sinful man like me can be indignant about sin, then what must be our holy God's conception about sin? If I have a feeling of injustice and fiery about sin, what must be God's feeling about sin, I wonder.

Make no mistake about it. God intends to wipe out evil and sin in this world. Evil must be eradicated. And hell is there to eradicate evil and those who refuse to repent from evil. In Matthew 10:28, the Lord Jesus says, ... *do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him* (i.e. God) *who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.*

Understand deeply and clearly the importance of God's Word when God speaks about sin. The God of all holiness and all justice will see that in this universe, not one stain of evil and sin will remain. If you understand that, you will understand that plucking out an eye or cutting off a hand in order to avoid sin is nothing compared to the suffering of the sinner in hell.