

A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS
XLV. The Sermon On The Mount: False And True Righteousness
E. Christ's Righteousness Regarding The Issue Of Adultery
(Matthew 5:27-30 et al.)

I. Introduction

- A. Christ's great Sermon on the Mount provided valuable insight on God's true righteousness, what Israel's religious leaders greatly lacked as seen in their dead traditionalism.
- B. To illustrate the contrast between the false righteousness of Israel's leaders and God's true righteousness, Jesus gave six illustrations, with the second illustration regarding the issue of adultery in Matthew 5:27-30.
- C. We study this passage in view of other Scriptures for insight, application and edification (as follows):

II. Christ's Righteousness Regarding The Issue Of Adultery, Matthew 5:27-30 et al.

- A. The prohibition of adultery was "designed to protect the marriage institution." (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 179) Marriage, in turn, was created by God for the fulfillment of individual human beings who were created by God to be fruitful and to multiply, Genesis 1:27-28. God saw that it was not good for Adam to be alone, so he created a helpmeet for him in his wife Eve. To help make that relationship between man and woman indissoluble, He created Eve from Adam's own body and brought her to him that they might be forever intimately united as husband and wife, Genesis 2:18-24.
- B. However, when sin entered the human race, the human sexuality that God designed to be a source of physical and emotional bonding between a man and a woman in marriage was used in lust that led to social destruction:
 - 1. From sinful Cain's line came his descendant Lamech who took two wives out of lust, Genesis 4:18-22.
 - 2. Lamech's sexual lust that led to bigamy spread over to proud violence: he "killed someone who tried to kill him," so he boasted "that if anyone should try to avenge the murder, he would take care of himself seventy and sevenfold, without any help from God, such as Cain received." (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Genesis 4:23-24)
 - 3. Lamech's unchecked sexual lust that spilled over to proud violence spread to fill the earth with violent men who were full of unrestrained lust, and who took all the women they desired and by them sired violent gangs of men who filled the world with violence that led to the Genesis Flood, Genesis 6:1-2, 4, 13.
- C. Accordingly, to protect human marriage and thus society, God had Moses direct Israel to avoid adultery, what Jesus noted in Matthew 5:27. (J. Dwight Pentecost, The Words and Works of Jesus Christ, 1991, p. 179)
- D. However, the Pharisees believed that as long as they did not commit the physical act of adultery, they fulfilled the righteousness of God regarding the sanctity of human marriage, but in view of the sinful nature and how it could distort the sexual drive in mankind as seen in the events that led up to the Genesis Flood, Jesus delved into the issue of the misuse of the sexual drive: He added that whoever looked on a person sexually to lust after that person had already committed adultery with that person in his heart, Matthew 5:28.
- E. Accordingly, Matthew 5:29-30 directed that people needed to take strong action deal with the cause of the abuse of the sexual drive, and He used strong language to indicate that need for strong action (as follows):
 - 1. Matthew 5:29-30 *literally* speak of physical self-mutilation to avoid sin, but in reality, Jesus "was not teaching physical mutilation, for a blind man can lust, and a man with no hands can have unlawful desires. Christ taught that one must deal with the sin of lust because this was the root of the problem of adultery. It is not enough to merely abstain from lust's outward manifestation, that is, adultery." (Ibid.)
 - 2. Obviously, Jesus was demonstrating the need for every sinner who has a natural, God-given sexual drive to bring that drive under God's control instead of the control of one's sin nature that tends toward lust, cf. Galatians 5:19-21. Such control is available only through salvation in Christ when the Holy Spirit comes to indwell the believer and to produce righteousness through faith, Galatians 5:16; Romans 8:3-4.

Lesson: *The God-given sexual drive was meant for mankind in the state of innocence to be a physical and emotional bond that keeps a man and woman committed to each other in marriage, providing a solid foundation for the stability of the home and society. However, with the entrance of sin, the sexual drive was abused out of lust to the eventual destruction of marital, family, and social structures as seen in the need for God to destroy the world in the Flood. Thus, it is imperative that people go beyond just abstaining from the physical act of adultery to address the issue of lust that leads to the act, and that through salvation in Christ and reliance on the Holy Spirit.*

Application: *For the edifying use of the sexual drive, may we trust in Christ and walk by means of the Holy Spirit.*