

“The Heart of the Matter”

Matthew 5v27-30

Scripture Ref: Rom 1:18-25; Col 3:2; Phil 4:6-8

1. **The heart – the organ that pumps blood through your body...**
 - a. **Metaphorically – the place where human thought, emotion, and spirit come together to form the basis of our humanity.**
 - b. **If you look into the human heart – what do you see?**

*"The heart is deceitful above all things,
And desperately wicked;
Who can know it?
I, the LORD, search the heart,
I test the mind,
Even to give every man according to his ways,
According to the fruit of his doings.
Jer 17:9-10*

- c. **We find as we delve deeper into Jesus teaching, that He begins to touch on matters of the heart**
- d. **Moving beyond what you SAY or DO – and into what happens in the human heart, which is what drives what you say and do.**

Adultery in the Heart

27 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.'

2. **This tells us that Jesus is talking about the marriage relationship – how we are to live with the context of our married lives.**
 - a. **Jews of that day, even in our liberal culture today, people understand that its wrong to have physical relations with someone other than your wife.**
 - b. **If you not sure about that, just ask your spouse if they think it's ok!**
 - c. **Go ahead – guys ask your wife if it would be ok – I'll wait! (!)**
 - d. **Seriously, right now would be a good time to proclaim in a convincing tone “that is preposterous; I would never even consider such a thing!”**
3. **Of course you would never consider such a thing... but what about when you are at the beach, or at the mall, and skimpily dressed female walks by your path...**
 - a. **Does your wife have to repeat the question she just asked you?**

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.

4. See Jesus is dealing with something here that many men consider “their manly right”, and see nothing wrong with it... LUST
5. Guys, apparently what we think *does matter* – at least in this case!
6. So if I were to paraphrase the point...
 - a. “Hey I have never had physical relations with another women, only my wife...”
 - b. Great – but what about in your mind? Have you lusted after another woman in your mind?
 - c. If so – then you have committed adultery in your heart!
7. You might be thinking “Clay, that is a bit much – I mean, you mean to say I can’t even look at another women – let me clarify...
 - a. It is not a sin to look at an attractive woman, and acknowledge that she is attractive.
 - i. There are some people born into this world whose physical appearance is a testimony to God’s beautiful craftsmanship!
 - b. As well – it is not a sin if a girl in a skimpy bikini walks in front of you and your eyes catch sight – and your flesh wants to lock in the radar tracking.
 - i. That is a passing thought – an impulse
 - ii. That is your sin nature – your flesh, kicking in and saying “feed me!”
8. Where it becomes sin is this – *when we make the conscious decision to linger – to watch with our eyes and engage our mind.*

Definition:

epithumeo (ep-ee-thoo-meh'-o); to set the heart upon, i.e. long for
KJV - covet, desire, lust (after)

- a. To “lust afer” is to starting having thoughts that – well let’s just say if your mind were being recorded, you would not want your wife and kids watching!
- b. Here is a good barometer – if you are thinking something that you would not do in front of your wife, you are in trouble!

Why Lust is a Problem

9. Now we might wonder – “why is it a problem what happens in my mind?” There are three good reasons...

Reason #1

10. If we allow our minds to dwell on sinful thoughts, we will become enslaved by those thoughts, and at some point we act on them.

Rom 1:18-25

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became **futile in their thoughts**, and their **foolish hearts were darkened**. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man -- and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.*

*24 Therefore **God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves**, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*

- a. **Here is a truth – every vile thing that a person does has been fully imagined in the mind... first.**
 - b. **That's why child porn is illegal – that's why they won't let sexual predator's possess porn – because what they see will incite their mind – and they will re-offend.**
- 11. I have known more than one Christian whose thought life took them to the next level or pornography, they became enslaved to it**
- a. **Then – the next step is to act on it – to have an adulterous relationship**
 - b. **... and it all starts in the mind!**

Reason #2

12. If a man allows himself to have a lustful thought life, it will affect his relationship with the wife.

- a. **Each time he imagines another woman in his mind, he is putting away his own wife in his mind.**
- b. **She will never live up to his debased lustful thought life.**
- c. **And it WILL have a affect on his relationship towards her – he will become cold, indifferent, unsatisfied,**

Reason #3

13. It draws is away from the Lord

- a. Hear what Paul says here...

*21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became **futile in their thoughts**, and their **foolish hearts were darkened**. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man...*

- b. **FACT – you cannot have a debased mind, and still have a connected relationship with God – the two cannot co-exist.**

14. Not just about men – women may think differently, perhaps not as carnal as a man might...

- a. But even if she is only dwelling on “romantic thoughts”, the effect is the same -

15. Sometimes a person will say “I can’t help myself” with regards impure thoughts.

- a. But in fact we can control what we allow to reign in our mind and heart.
- b. I can attest – personal experience – you can change your mind!
- c. We do it all the time with things we DON’T want to do!
- i. If I don’t want to deal with a bad situation, I can block it from my mind
- ii. If I see a terrible image – or a very sad situation, I choose NOT to dwell on it!
- d. It is as simple as replacing that thought with another one...

16. “What thought” you ask? Glad you did...

Col 3:2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.

*Phil 4:6-8 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by **prayer and supplication**, with **thanksgiving**, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, **will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus**.*

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report,

- a. You cannot dwell on the Lord and impure thoughts at the same time!

17. And if that doesn’t work, then just gouge out your eye...

Gouge out your Eye

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.

18. Biblical interpretation 101: Jesus is NOT telling you to gouge out your eye or cut off you hand, and then you won't sin anymore!

- a. **You could gouge out both eyes and cut off both hands, and still sin every day in your mind.**
- b. **It is a figure of speech, hyperbole, to prove the previous point, that sin must be dealt with...**
 - i. **Radically – as in RIGHT NOW**
 - ii. **And in the heart!**

19. The last deployment I did with the Navy demonstrated this point

- a. **I had a real alcohol problem, but as long as we were at sea I was fine – worked hard, did my job, didn't get into trouble.**
- b. **I was “cut off” from drinking...**
- c. **But as soon as we pulled into port – all bets were off!**

20. That is how many Christians try and overcome sin, by cutting off the hand!

- a. **And while there is certainly wisdom in not putting ourselves in a place of temptation,**
- b. **The real work needs to be done in the heart!**

Copyright © 2008 Pastor Clay Ritter. This data file is the sole property of Pastor Clay Ritter. It may be copied only in its entirety for circulation freely without charge. All copies of this data file must contain this copyright notice. This data file may not be copied in part, edited, revised, copied for resale or incorporated in any commercial publications, recordings, broadcasts, performances, displays or other products offered for sale, without the written permission of Pastor Clay Ritter. Requests for permission should be made in writing and addressed to Pastor Clay Ritter, c/o Calvary Chapel of Wilmington, 2831 Carolina Beach Rd, Wilmington NC, 28412.