

The Heart of the Matter

by Don McClure

The sermon explores the deeper implications of Jesus' teachings on lust and the heart, emphasizing the need for spiritual transformation and reliance on Christ's power.

Duration: 53:17

Scripture: Matthew 5:27-30, Matthew 6:33, Romans 7:21-25, Galatians 5:16-17, Ephesians 6:10-12, James 1:14-15

Topics: "Spiritual Warfare", "Temptation Resistance"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the nature of the world and how it constantly tries to distract people from God. He emphasizes the temptation that is prevalent in society, particularly in the way people dress. The preacher then connects this to the fallen nature of humanity and the spiritual battle that we all face. He highlights the two natures within us, the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit, as described in Galatians 5. The preacher encourages listeners to be aware of their thoughts and choices, reminding them that they have the power to resist temptation and choose the path of love and righteousness.

Transcript

Matthew 5, picking it up tonight, in verse 27. Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee. For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee.

For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. Father, we thank you for your word. And Lord, we thank you and we praise you for your love for us.

Lord, that these issues of life, Lord, that are so powerful, that have such a prevailing influence in the world today, and have such a great effect in our lives, we are so grateful, Lord, that you have your word for us to help us, to minister to us, to teach us. And Lord, we ask that tonight, as we do open your word, that you would just open our hearts. Perhaps there's some of us, as last week, we looked at you and teaching us of anger.

Lord, just be able to open our heart and say, Lord, you know my struggles with anger. I'd love to be changed, to understand how to be free. And Lord, tonight, as we look at another area that you, of course, know the effect on the world and the pressure on our lives, Lord, of lust, and Lord, for us to be able to come and say, Lord, thank you for your word.

Such a real struggle in life. We ask that you would teach us, strengthen us, feed us, help us, Lord, set us free. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. You may be seated. Well, again and again and again, as we have been going through here the Sermon on the Mount, I constantly, as you know, am going back and back and back every time, because it is so critical that we always look at the Beatitudes.

You see, the Beatitudes, of course, are the foundation of the Sermon on the Mount. Without the Beatitudes, the Sermon on the Mount is actually, perhaps, the most absurd, difficult sermon, I suppose, ever preached, if you were to just take the Sermon on the Mount and remove the Beatitudes from it. As a matter of fact, there are more than a few commentators who actually look at the Sermon on the Mount and don't even believe it's for this age.

They actually believe it's for the kingdom age. It's for something in the future, a time when Jesus comes, rules the world, when he reigns over it, then we will have the capacity to live like this. And then Jesus is ruling.

Because when you look at it, there's a lot of people that here, on one hand, Jesus said there that he has come to set us free, and we have looked earlier on being free from the law. And yet at the same time, when you would look at the Sermon on the Mount, if anything, Jesus almost intensifies things in the hearer's eyes. He has, you have heard that hath been said by them of old time, thou shall not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of judgment.

I say unto you, you know, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, he's in danger. I mean, somebody listening to this, you know, you have heard that hath been said by them of old time, thou shall not commit adultery. But I say unto you that whosoever looks at a woman with lust after her has committed adultery already in his heart.

I mean, you look here and you think the law was tough. Now Jesus, if anything, he says, it's worse. And how in the world is difficult as it was, you couldn't even fulfill it the way that it was being presented, and now Jesus has intensified it.

But you see, the Beatitudes and so much of the rest of the New Testament, they teach us that in a very, very real way, Jesus is here now. Though he hasn't set up his kingdom age, millennial reign, though it is something that for every believing Christian, he is here and he's real and he is powerful and he is as accessible and he is as able to set us free today as he will be then. Our access to him, to his power, to his transforming work within us, to his ministry, to his purposes, they are completely sufficient.

We look at the millennial reign in people of theology, it would be so wonderful to be then, around then, and you know, Jesus will be there. Well, he's here now. We have this full, the veil has been rent, not a little rent, not kind of rent, you know, but it's fully, from the top to the bottom, access into God's power, into his presence, into his fullness.

It is here and it is for us and it is for now. In the Beatitudes, that's essentially what they're all about. The Beatitudes are powerfully and wonderful for the person that wants that access to Jesus, that wants his power.

Lord, I need it now. I need your work. I need your grace.

I need your strength. I need your mercy. The person there that is poor in spirit, sorry for their own sins, their own sinful nature, our own ability to take over and to rule and to reign and to get ourselves into such terrible messes.

Yeah, but when there we're poor in spirit, we mourn over, we become meek before God and then he fills us with himself and the proof of it is there a merciful spirit, a pure heart, a peacemaker, a whole new life begins to work within us. And as these things are happening within our heart and within our life, he enables us to live under his power, to live under his authority and to experience his blessings in the most wonderful way. So here, Jesus, he's not adding to the law.

He's essentially just clarifying it. You see, over time, the Pharisees had actually taken the law and they had reduced it way down from what it actually was at the beginning. When he says, you know, that thou shalt not commit adultery, they had just said, don't do it.

And kind of limited almost to the activity of adultery itself. But yet, at the same time, under the law, that was never what it was. It was always, even the other Ten Commandments, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.

And here it is something, don't lust after your neighbor's wife. Not only did Bible say don't commit adultery, it also says don't lust after her. Don't take her under yourself in your own heart.

Well, the Pharisees had kind of reduced it down to where, hey, we got to make this thing a little more livable. The Bible had really taught that you weren't to hate, you were to love. It's all in the Old Testament.

Nothing new about that, essentially, there. But they had reduced it now, just don't kill. You know, they've kind of just tried to adjust the law around so we could feel a little better about ourselves.

Hey, you know, that they're, I suppose, just we're the same as people have always been through history. There may be some of us that have killed somebody. And if you do, would you raise your hand? We have some people.

No, but if, but there may be some that, you know, that there's that, but probably not many. But who here has not been guilty of hating? I mean, at that point, all of a sudden, I mean, how do you, wait a minute, all right, I can keep from pulling the trigger. I can keep from, I think I can probably go all the way through life and never murder anybody.

But you tell me I've got to go through life and not hate anybody? Come on. We may be able to go through our life and be able to say, I've never committed adultery. I'm never going to do it.

But then when Jesus said, you ever looked? Look, what do you mean? And then he goes on to tell us exactly what he means. He said, oh, come on, wait a minute here. You know, and we're always trying to adjust things.

And that's what the Pharisees had done. Said it brought it to a level to where they could kind of live with it without a sense of feeling like they had failed. Well, the law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

It was to tell me I was a failure. It was to tell me this is what God created man to be. When God created man in his image, he put him here on this planet.

And there was such a character. There was such a depth. There was such a love.

There was such a nature within him that it wasn't even in him. Wasn't even a part of him to murder, let alone hate, let alone there to be angry. He is so filled with the love and the nature and the character of God that there he would never take something that wasn't his.

There, you know, there wasn't covered. He wouldn't lust after something that belonged to somebody else. That's how God created man in such a way being so filled with his heart and his life and his nature and his character.

He is free from all that until men sinned. And then as soon as man sinned and fell with it, we found ourself there with a fallen nature. And the Sermon on the Mount, though, it deals with this great battle that we now have today.

The battle between essentially how God created us to be, you might say, and the life that we kind of so often live. The Sermon on the Mount, the whole Sermon on the Mount, essentially, it's a story of a great spiritual battle that we all have. And I believe here in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, he's wanting us to tell us, I want you to know I understand the battle and I want you to understand the battle.

I want to tell you how to fight the battle and I'm going to tell you how to win the battle, how to have victory in the battle. And so there's two natures, though, first of all, that we've been discussing at different times a little bit. I'll just read them to you.

Actually, you can turn to him if you like, but Galatians chapter five, verse 19, Paul tells us there, he says, now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these. And then he gives us this wonderful little list of the characteristics, the nature of our flesh, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulants, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envies, murders, drunkenness, revelings. Here he looks there and he said to hear Jesus said, let me do the Bible tells us, let me just tell you a little bit about your nature.

And, uh, but what, when God looks at a man, these are the, the, the attributes that he sees within the natural man, all of us, he goes on in verse 22 and Paul writes, he says, but the fruit of the spirit is love. And he defines a joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. And he says, again, such, there is no law.

When somebody is living in the realm of the spirit, there's no, there's a free, there is no law there. There's a powerful, wonderful word. But here is the Bible tells us there are just two natures, only two options from which you and I have to live.

One is the nature of the flesh. And there is that list. And then there is the nature of the spirit.

And, uh, we were born with one, the nature of the flesh, and we are born again and offered another. And, uh, then one, of course, the nature of the flesh, the others of the nature of the spirit, the list of the flesh is

rather raunchy, I suppose, rather ugly. And, uh, but I'll tell you, I believe everybody does themselves a tremendous favor when they look at that list and they realize that is me.

That is my nature. That is what the Bible says. Those are the characteristics of us.

It's interesting. The first four of them are all essentially in one way or another related to sexual misconduct there. When he says they're adultery, fornication and cleanness, lasciviousness.

And therefore, as far as the Bible is concerned, when God looks at natural man, uh, sexual struggle is no small matter. It's a very real issue. It's a very powerful dynamic in the, in the natural flesh, the natural man.

And I think we do all of ourselves a great favor when we look at this and realize this is very real. When we find ourselves there looking at this list and we don't argue with it, we don't defend ourselves. We just, Oh, come on, I'm better than that.

You know what I mean? I, I mean, it's, I don't like that order. I mean, maybe, maybe envy. I, okay.

I got a little envy problem now and then I, you know, I go down to Nordstrom's and I envy, okay. You know, or whatever, but, but that isn't as bad as, I mean, why do you have adultery, fornication and cleanness, lasciviousness, but, uh, well, that's what the Bible says. So we just ought to take it for that and find and realize that this is our nature.

And some of us, we want to argue with it. And as long as we're arguing with it, we're only setting ourself up to perpetuate it. We, instead of trying to say we're better than that, I think the most wonderful thing that we can ever do is when we realize, God, you leave me to my own nature, outside of any disciplines I tried to learn or ways I've tried to cover it or manipulate it or deal with it or hide it, but left to my own self, this is me.

Paul in Romans, he said, I know that in so far as my sinful self is concerned, or actually in the King James, I think it says that I know that in me that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing. And, uh, but sometimes when he put it in the King James almost sounds okay. I know that in me that is in my flesh dwelleth no good thing.

Wow. That sounds good. The living Bible actually, like it's a, what it says, Paul says, I know that in so far as my sinful self is concerned, I am rotten through and through, you know, Paul looks there and he says, I have come to the realization that left to my sinful nature, it is absolutely rotten.

And it is corrupt from one end to the other, nothing redeemable about it from one end to the other. That is sin is utterly devastated me and it has taken his full force and brought me down. Now, Paul, on one hand, he lived a very good life, a very moral life on all the external.

And he goes on, he says, I had never thought I'd be, you know, really, you know, failed in a lot of things until the law showed me. Had lusted when it says thou shall not covet. Then I realized I've sinned.

And then when Paul began to realize there that, uh, that against God, we have this nature. And when we stop kidding with ourselves and we realize, you know, Lord, this is me left to myself. Now I can't speak of, you know, women.

I don't know what your problems are. And, uh, I assume they're much the same. Uh, but I can speak for a man because I've read a lot of books about men and, uh, studied them in great detail.

And, uh, and I can say that if there, at least if there's any man that wants to say, well, I don't believe this. That's that. No, that's cool.

What do you got? Let me tell you, if you don't believe it, did you have anything to struggles with adultery, fornication and cleanness or lasciviousness, you're either a liar or you need to see a doctor, I suppose. But there, but if you got the natural human nature, this is what we have to deal with. And, uh, uh, but equally though, the wonderful message of Christianity is God looks at it and he loves to roll up his sleeves and say, I know all of this.

I'll never look at you. I'll never get into your heart or into your life and all the little secret chambers of who you are and what you think and what goes on. I'll never be surprised.

I know everything about you. And I know you're too bad to be true. I know you're hopeless.

I know how runts you are. I still love you. You created my image and I've got all the capacity to fix every bit of it and I'm going to fix it.

If you'll just let me get a start and then begin to open your heart and begin to trust me that I've got the capacity to change all of these things. And then is when I think we are at the place where God can start doing some wonderful things within our heart when we realize, God, this is me and help me. And then when we realize that these are struggles that we do, we have in this life.

If we just want to say, if we like the Pharisees, thou shalt not commit adultery. And then we can say, well, I've never done that. And so we can slide on by.

But then we say, you're never dead. What happens there when your heart finds you, your eyes follow somebody and there is some attraction. And then the enemy wants to come along with some sort of desire and you find your heart responding to it.

That's what lust is all about. And there that Jesus said, this is, wouldn't you love to be free from this? And he said that there, when a man looks this way and he has this battle going on within his heart, Jesus is not simply saying here, I can help you with the superficial issues of life. He's saying, I can help you with the deepest struggles within your heart.

I understand everything about you. And if you will come to me and be honest with me about what I already know about you, and then you'll come to grips that you know it too, and you want something to change it. But a lot of people don't want to do that.

Some years ago, actually, when we moved from Southern California up to Northern California, and we were moving, and we had a mover helping us. And there were some fellows there helping us, you know, from the moving company there. And as we are loading, you know, the van, and bringing stuff in and out and, you know, with it, and I had a couple of my boys there helping as well.

Evidently, one time when I was in the house going back and forth, a young gal had walked by and one of these movers looked and made some sort of a sexual comment about it. And one of my sons turned to him and he said, that's wrong. And then they got into a discussion whether it was wrong or not.

This guy says, no, it isn't wrong. I didn't do anything. And he was a married guy and he had children.

And he said, I don't, I don't commit adultery. And he said, he said, well, the Bible says it's adultery. He did not know it.

That is not wrong. And I'm coming in and my brother, or my son says to me, he says, Dad, where in the Bible does it say that to look at a woman with lust is wrong? And I said, it's from the Mount Matthew. And so he goes in and gets his Bible and he brings it out and he's got, they got out there in the box inside the van and he's reading to this guy.

The next time I come walking in this guy, he's got literally, he's got his head in his hands. He said, no, no, no, this can't be. As he's reading it and he's reading, he's realized, he says, he literally says, this is one of my favorite pastimes.

You know, it's going on. This can't be wrong. He's looking there and he's a married guy and he's got family, but he just, you know, some gal walks by and just stop and look over and follow her down and have that grand old time.

And just think there's nothing wrong with it. Well, meantime, his natural heart is just doing its natural thing. But here are the battles.

These are the battles of life, essentially. Again, wonderfully, as I said, God, God not only knows about it to me, but I just pick up the Bible and you realize just looking at this from a distance tonight, even before we get into the personal application, you realize, Jesus, he's telling us, I know all about you. I know the struggle.

I know what it is that's happening constantly within your heart. I know the battles that are, that are always going on. And here he lovingly, mercifully, graciously wants to be able to approach it and say, not only do you know about it, I know how to fix it.

I know how, if you want to change something to where your life is set free from this. And essentially it's very much the same thing as we looked at last week in the sense, you know, of these things back, I believe we mentioned also in Galatians 5, 16, Paul, there, he makes this a very simple statement. We, I don't know if we looked at it much, but he says this.

I say then that you walk in the spirit and you will not fulfill the lust of the flesh for the lust, pardon me, for the flesh luscious against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. And these two are contrary one to another so that you cannot do the things that you would. Now here, Paul tells us, he says, you want to know how not to walk in the flesh.

You want to know how you're delivered from this nature that we're all born with. We all have, it's still there. Every one of us, by the way, I don't care how long you've been a Christian, you may be here and you've been a Christian for 450 years and or something or whatever you feel like it's been forever and you love the Lord and you've walked with him and mighty things have happened.

Let me tell you, you still have a flesh and you know it. And in fact, the person that usually is the oldest in the Lord knows it the best of all. Paul in his first epistle, he said, I'm a sinner.

45 years later in his last epistle, he says, I am the chiefest of sinners. That's growth for 45 years of spiritual growth. He started off just a simple center at the end of 45 years.

He says, I'm chief. I'm the biggest center I know, but the closer one gets to the Lord, the greater we realize his mercy and his grace has always been. You first come to the Lord, you, you, you make him these promises.

I'm going to be so good. You wait until you see what I'm going to do for you in heaven and everybody, it's just going to be wonderful. And then, you know, you start off with all this ignorant zeal.

And then as time goes on, you realize the depths of God's mercy, of his patience, of his grace with us, of his long suffering on how he cares. Now he spends an entire lifetime with us bringing this flesh into subjection, but we realize it's always there, never goes away. It's always there.

And there we, we, but the difference is, is the only thing about a mature Christian, an immature Christian is the mature one has realized that he respects that. And he has realized the only deliverance from it is to walk in the spirit. And if he doesn't, he will immediately gravitate to the flesh.

There's no other option. There's no other alternative to it. Either you're going to walk in the spirit and he says, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Then he, interestingly, he says next verse, he says for the flesh lust against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh, for these two are contrary to one another so that you cannot do the things that you would. And here, one of the most interesting verses to me in the Bible to look at, he says the flesh lusts against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. Now I understand why the flesh lusts against the spirit.

That's, that's not a, that's a no brainer. The flesh there within us, it looks over here at the spirit and he sees this unbelievable dynamic. The flesh there, it sees life, it sees power, it sees love, it sees gentleness, kindness, it sees wisdom, it sees a plan, it sees this maturity, this stability, all this stabilizing thing here, the flesh looks over there and how it, which is, I had those qualities.

Boy, if I could just get my hands on those things, the natural man says. So I understand why the flesh, you know, lust is against the spirit, but why in the world would the spirit ever against the flesh? Why would it ever covet anything in the flesh? Because you look there and say, what does the flesh have that the spirit would think a thing about? It's very simple. This, the flesh has the throne.

Flesh has seemed to, you know, when you, when you look at your own nature and you realize the flesh that we have within us and you stop to realize there. And now the flesh always is first consulted. The flesh is the know it all that, hey, let me handle this.

The flesh nature that we have here, the spirit has all this power, all this dynamic living within us. And yet day by day, the Holy spirit there, he watches us wake up and then we get up. Oh, what am I doing today? Where am I going? How am I doing it? And we start planning out our day.

You know, while the, you know, we sit on the throne master of our own life, charting out our own course, making our own plans, trying to fulfill commitments, promises, hopes, dreams, all in our own strength of the flesh. That's an entirely inadequate to do it here. But the flesh is the first mentioned first order first to be consulted first to give, be given a shot at it.

And it isn't until some crisis happens in our life. We embarrass ourself. The flesh does some stupid thing.

And we're sitting, what happened here? What's gone wrong? I'm sorry, but man, I'm a Christian. And then all these spirits, it says, yeah, and you're also a carnal one. You're also in the flesh and then realize that's it.

Isn't it? I'm not, I'm not letting you do it. I'm sorry. The Holy Spirit patiently, lovingly says, it's okay.

Just go die somewhere with you and we'll take over. You know what I mean? The Holy Spirit said, give me, give me a shot. But here though, the spirit looks there and how it longs to have that preeminence within our heart that the nature of the flesh seems to have.

But the wonderful thing is, is that that's the, that's the glorious thing in heaven. We'll finally be done with that. Right now, the battle goes on within us.

I read this little story one time of a grandfather who was weeding his garden with his grandson and here he's, he's weeding the flowers and cleaning all around them. And, and the grandson had come over and periodically they'd have to go out and get the weeds. So they didn't crowd out and kill all the flowers.

One time, the grandson, he asked his granddaddy, he says, grandpa. And he says, how, why is it that the weeds are always taking over the flowers? Why don't the flowers take over the weeds? And grandpa, he thought there for a moment and he said, well, I'll tell you, grandson, he says, the earth is the soil is natural mother to the weed, stepmother to the flower. And in one sense, it's like the within us that, that our flesh, our nature, it seems to be natural mother to the flesh and stepmother almost to the spirit in our, in our own life.

And then coming to that place to where we want to make the spirit of God totally enthroned. That's the great work ultimately the glorification will have in heaven, where the flesh there won't be there. It'll be gone.

We'll be conformed to his image, but there won't be any getting up in heaven. Or do we go to sleep? But anyway, they're moving around in heaven, in having to deal with the flesh. Won't be the devil.

There won't be the world. They'll all be gone. And they'll just be this wonderful, glorious Liberty of the spirit of God.

But until then this battle, it goes on. And, uh, and, and that is the struggle. And here though, is, uh, Jesus is wanting us to understand this.

You know, he's telling us here in the Sermon on the Mount of Beatitudes. He says, this is the transfer of authority. This is how you turn your life over to me through the Beatitudes.

And once you've turned it over, he said, now here are the practical applications of my Lordship, because when I am King and when I am Lord, you're going to find yourself going out into a world where there's struggles and there's human beings and you can get mad at them and you can reject them and you can want to hate them. And he says, but if you let me reign, I'll handle it. I'll love them.

And also there'll be other people that rather than getting mad at them, you'll covet them. You'll lust after them. Say, I want that one, kill that one, give me that one, you know, anything.

And he says, but, you know, there'll be something there within my spirit that rather than, you know, uh, destroying one and ruining another. And, uh, he said, well, I can help you deal with things because you

see, you don't have to be a Christian very long to realize you can be a saved person and a lustful saved person or a judgmental saved person or a lonely or a, or a depressed Christian feeling like you're utterly a failure. But the wonderful thing here is Jesus says that these, here's what's going on.

I know your battle and I know your struggle. And, uh, but there, first of all, as we looked at even last week, hatred starts there with the absence of walking in the spirit. So to with adultery, you cannot walk in it in the spirit and fulfill the flesh and you can't live in it.

You can't. And the wonderful thing is that when I come and I give my life to the Lord in a practical daily way. And when I realized the world and the temptations and the struggles right in the face of all these things, I can take my life and say, Jesus, fill it, give it to me so that I am not subject to this world and it's anger or it's hate or it's murder or it's lust.

I want to be free from them. I want to live on another plane. I want to live in another realm.

You see, it's interesting back in the old Testament. You remember the book of Hosea and, uh, but, uh, it's an interesting and a wonderful little book, but there it is. It begins, uh, the Lord speaks to Hosea and he says to Hosea, go take the wife of Harlot tree and children of Harlot tree for the land has committed great Harlot tree departing from the Lord.

God looked at the children of Israel and he said, you know, you're guilty of spiritual adultery. You have given your heart to another. And because you've given your heart to another, God looked at it.

He says, you've committed adultery against me. And essentially every time a person does commit lust or adultery or whatever else you want to call it in this life, what is happening when I am doing that, it's really the second time I've done it. You might say the first time was, is when I broke communion with God, when I departed from him, when I took my life in my own hands, when I set up my own kingdom, when I found myself, you know, here's where I'm going and what I'm doing and I'll, I'll handle it.

At that point, I departed from communion. I departed from the life of his spirit. I departed from fellowship with him.

And in that departure, God looks at that and he says, there was your first adultery. You departed from loving me, giving yourself to me. You gave yourself to your own flesh.

And now when you go out giving yourself to your own flesh, the natural thing that flesh is going to do is a little alarm system. Hopefully we'll go off when now you start coveting somebody else's flesh and you realize, oh man, that's wrong. You better believe it is that it really got to trace it back to not just simply there to go back to the moment you took your heart from me.

The moment there that you decided that you were capable of living on this planet without being born and filled and led and guided and empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit. Something that Jesus never did for one moment from cradle to grave, literally from his birth, born of the Holy Spirit, offered to God through the Holy Spirit, filled with the Holy Spirit. He lived in the power of the Holy Spirit.

His ministry, his preaching was all in the power and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It was entirely a spirit filled, led, guided. There was never one moment of one day that there Jesus did anything but surrender entirely his life to the Father.

And he watches us when we go out and we do some terrible thing. And then we get ourself in trouble and we think it happened here. And Jesus said, no, it didn't happen there.

It happened the moment you could live without my power. And we live in a world today where adultery, when it happens physically, it's happened soulishly already. It already had the attribute of lusting.

By the time anybody actually maybe carries it out, if they do, although that's not necessary to fail, they've also had it in their heart. But before they had it in their heart, they'd already taken their heart away from the Lord. Taken our heart and away from his power.

And then we found ourself open into temptation, which is constantly around us. Talk about temptation. Just in my lifetime, I look at what's happened, whether in the world of TV and the things that are on it.

We've gone a long way from my three sons, you know, to married with children, you know, or the stuff that is out there now. Everything is so lustful. It's based.

It seems, you know, we don't even sell anything any longer without a naked woman doing it. Somehow or another, it seems like you can't even watch a football game without being tempted. Without somebody there, you know, coming out half naked there, did she get somebody's attention? Because the world of advertising knows where the heart of man is, knows where to go to find it, to sell him his product, knows the hook, knows the attraction.

And we're living in a way now where temptation is everywhere. There's no sin, by the way, in temptation. And no problem there.

But it's when you respond to it, as James says, the enemy can tempt you, but now you have a choice in what you're going to do with it. I remember one time years ago, my wife and I were sitting there watching TV one night, and an ad comes on, and there's some half-dressed girl selling something, and she's falling out of her outfit. And as we're sitting there looking at this thing, all of a sudden, Jean comes over, she sticks her head right in my face, and she says, what are you thinking right this second? I looked in, I said, what? Need to buy myself a couple seconds there.

And she says, you heard me, what are you thinking right this second? And I said, you know, I don't think I was thinking anything. And she says, really? And I said, I guess I just spaced out. And she says, I don't do that.

Well, we're different. She believed me. I can't remember exactly what I was thinking.

Probably, I don't know where they get that material, but if something breaks, they're going to have a real mess here, or whatever on this thing. But you're looking at the world around us, and it is constantly trying to grab a person away from God. That's the nature of the world.

That is what it is all about, and how it works, how it operates. And when we find ourselves realizing the temptation in which we live, and not to get too far distracted from the message, but I suppose it fits, I wish today a lot of these young girls, or their mothers, or somebody to sit down with them, or the mothers too in some cases, but and realize, you know, what it is. I mean, that whether Hollywood, or Paris, or New York, or London, or Rome, or whoever it is that seems to dictate these dress outfits these days, but realize, you know, what it is, that now people are walking around and dressed in the temptation that they're putting to people through, while they maybe just think they're cute.

And I can, I guess I'm old enough, it's easy to talk about it a little bit, being a grandpa, and looking, but well, I don't know, I'm not, I don't know, I'm not, never mind. But the, but I mean, on how, but when people would sit there and realize the battle that's going on. I remember some time ago watching Barbara Walters doing an interview of some, you know, Hollywood actress of, you know, another era.

And she was a great actress, a well-known actress. And as she was talking to this actress, she asked her most interesting question. She said, you know, today with a lot of the actresses, and the nude scenes that they're doing, she said, she asked her, she said, let me, if you were an actress today, do you believe that you would do a nude scene? And she said, no.

Yeah, which I thought, well, that's kind of nice. But the interesting thing about her response though, is that she said, I believe that any good actress can be at least as seductive as a naked one, fully dressed. And you know, I suppose that's true, that somebody there, the ability to tempt, the ability to draw somebody away, has a lot to do with behavior or dress and mannerisms, and a lot of things that are acted out constantly in our society today, everywhere you go, there's this constant unending temptation.

It's the way we sell products, it's the way we seem to dress and entertain and do all sorts of things. And unfortunately, kids are growing up thinking this is the natural world around us. But it's a terrible thing.

And it's devastating our society, it's destroying it. I just the other day happened to pick up a news, this just a secular news editor said, beware of the workplace, it could be hazardous to your marriage. Those wonderful friendships that make going to the office that's fun can turn into very romantic emotional affairs, when elements are present, and not one of them is sex.

Baltimore psychologist and marital researcher Shirley Glass tells them, and she said that the signs of an emotional affair are emotional intimacy. When you share about more, pardon me, when you share more about who you are, your hopes and your dreams, your frustrations and your failures with another person than you do with your own spouse, you have become emotionally intimate. As far as secrecy and deception, when you're telling your spouse that you're meeting, or do you tell your spouse that you're meeting this wonderful colleague for lunch in a cafeteria every day.

If you're not totally open and honest with your mate about all of your life, and you've got things that you do and people that you talk with, and that you continuously carry on with the opposite sex, if you are not open, that's a secrecy and a deception. This is a secular news article. Sexual chemistry, if there is sexual chemistry between you, then at the very best there is an unacknowledged sexual attraction, even if you never act on it.

But sometimes the greatest betrayals happen without touching. Infidelity is an emotional or sexual intimacy that violates trust. But this is just the world is now coming around there and realizing that our world lives in, there's this fantasy world that people can get caught up into.

Realizes that people are swimming in this behavior and this experience, and when they're writing about it in a secular way. But very simply, the way when a person looks and realizes that I have this nature, and I have this battle, and I have this struggle that goes on within me, the first and most wonderful way I believe in deliverance is confession. It's admitting it to God.

You'll never surprise Him. If you came to the Lord and said, Lord, I don't want to blow you away. Sit down, Lord, this is going to be tough on you.

You know or something, I got something to say about me that I know you probably think I'm really a great Christian and I'm going to disappoint you. Let me tell you, when you would sit there and say, Lord, I realize my nature, and I realize how I can carry on, or I realize there that I can talk, or I can touch, and I can flirt, and I can have this whole little world that I'm allowing to be created within my heart. I can go off to the office and I find myself there battling there, being a Christian, and wanting there to have a life that when I sit before the Bible and I sit in church and the higher and the greater life, and I want this, and yet I go out and here in a battlefield there's a world out there that I find myself toying with and tinkering with and joking about.

And a lot of the humor, it's a little questionable. It's a little, you know, on borderline. And all of these little ways in which our heart is being stolen away because the flesh cannot live as it ought.

And here Jesus basically just simply says, the Bible tells us, you walk in the Spirit and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. But there is no other alternative. When you go off to work, or you go out to lunch, or you're doing business, or wherever you are and wherever you go in the world, God has created in such a way is that there's two options.

Either I look at him and I say, Lord, I love you, and I love you more than anything else out there. As we looked at last week, Lord, I love you more than I'm angry at anybody. I love you more, and I'm not willing to give up my communion, my fellowship with you over my disappointment with the human being, over my anger, you know, with somebody, or over the foolish act that somebody else has done.

I don't care how foolish it is, or how dumb, or whether they cut me off on the road. Nothing is worth breaking communion with you. There is nobody in the world, there's nothing, anything, anywhere, anytime, anyhow, that is worth me breaking off that fellowship.

And now here Jesus also, now as he goes on the next one, he says, now is there any enticement out there, not something now that you're upset and you've got the negative emotions, I'm angry and I'm hostile as a fool, you know, that I want to deal with that. Now here's something that draws me into itself. That now when I realize, Lord, I just got to let these people go, and they get, you know, I love you.

I don't know why he cut me off on the road. I don't know what's going on, none of my business, not like you're my business. I want to walk in you.

That's the choice that we have. And also then when maybe all right, if I can't knock you out of fellowship, maybe I can draw you out of fellowship. Maybe I can get you to say, hey, here's something nice and warm and fuzzy and cuddly and cute and talk sweet, you know, whatever else.

Come over here and let's carry on. That's the nature of the flesh in the sense there to where if Jesus realizes fully there that these battles are out there, and he says, I know the struggle. But if you walk in the spirit, you won't fulfill the lust of the flesh.

You won't find yourself going on with these things. And that's the positive aspect of it. And then those, Jesus goes on.

And let me just quickly give you two other things here before we close. But in verse 29, he does give a great warning. He says, if I write, I offend thee, pluck it out, cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, cast it from thee, for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. Here, Jesus, now after on one hand in the Beatitudes, here is the great positive. Come to me.

Let me fill your heart. Let me fill your life. Let's walk together.

Let's exchange lives. You bury the old. Let me fill you with myself.

Let's go live. And here are the struggles that we're going to have out there. But then he also now looks at us after he says, walk with me.

Let me fill you. Now, you know, and he says there, I realize there's these temptations. I realize there's the flesh.

I realize that this thing wants you to be drawn into it and attracted to it. But now he looks at this thing. He says, now, though, not only do I want you, first of all, I remember an old Children of the Day love song or love Children of the Day song.

It had a wonderful little line in it. But don't try to drive the darkness out. Just turn on the light.

And the first thing here, you turn on the light, get into the spirit. But then after you do turn on the light, Jesus said, now anything that is going on in your life, that you realize the territory that it's in, it's infringing into your heart and into your life. And there it is, you know, constantly, you know, they're trying to find a way in this lustful relationship, this temptation, this area, this struggle.

He said, get rid of it. You're right. I offend thee.

Pluck it out. Cast it from thee. For it is profitable with thee that one of thy members should perish, and the whole body should be cast down.

I don't know how many of you know it, but just well get the confession out here. A few years ago, I lost my right eye. And so must have been a naughty little fella, but it's gone now.

So the left eye works fine. So I'm quite spiritual, I guess, actually. But actually, 1990, what was it? Seven.

But I don't know what that little fella did, but he's gone now. But anyway, the point of it is that Jesus said, if there is something that you're drawn by, buy. Get it out of your life.

Don't play with it. Bible says, flee youthful lust. Run from them.

Don't see how strong of a Christian you can be and tolerate. You know, nowhere in the Bible is ever say that if you've really got victory over temptation, you got victory over lust. Well, now you can go get the cable TV and you can watch whatever you want because you got victory.

No, it's just fleeing. Cut it out. And, you know, so often in life when we realize that this is life and it is there.

And here God wants to give us victory. But if I'm going to go right back into the area of the struggle and I'm going to establish, you know, some sort of behavior that I'm just going to try to live with. One time years ago, I had a fellow that came to me and he had problems with lust.

During the conversation, it came up that he actually had every Playboy magazine from the very beginning. He had this tremendous collection, if it could be called that. But at any rate, he had a collection of all of them.

And it was worth a lot of money, I guess. Well, the guy on one hand, I talked to him about, you know, this. I don't care what you got.

You got to get this out of your life. And he says, well, I don't look at it or anything. I don't know.

But it's just a valuable thing. I said, yeah, it's valuable. All right.

It's the enemy is valuable to him. But the interesting thing is, is we prayed and he wanted God to deliver him and deal with these things. I saw him later on and talked to him.

How are you doing? He said, I'm still struggling. I said, what do you do with the magazine? And he said, I put him in the attic. That's what he, you know, I said, oh, now you've got to climb upstairs to get him.

That's that's, you know, now you can fall down, hurt yourself while you're coveting and lusting. That's really smart. Get rid of them.

But so often people, they just, you know, put things that, you know, a little bit away while we're trying to have it. But here, the most important thing, the Bible says, flee it. Get yourself away.

If there is a relationship and there is anything that has any hold on you at all, you hear Jesus said, it is better for you to cut something out of your life. Some devastating thing is, you know, to lose it than it is for the left. Now, let this take the entire power of your life away and destroy you, which it does.

It's that powerful to do it. And when we don't realize that St. Augustine one time, maybe you've heard this testimony, you read of his testimony, but he, one time his mother didn't want him to go to Rome because he was such a handsome man and articulate and outgoing in his growing up in a ladies man. He wasn't a Christian.

She's praying God save Augustine, save Augustine. He didn't get saved. He did exactly what she prayed he wouldn't.

He went to Rome and he got down there in Rome. And sure enough, he's living with a woman. This is in his confessions, but there is he's living with this woman.

One day, finally, his mother's prayers took hold. He came to Christ that very day. He went home and he took a couple of things and he left never to come back again.

Never even went back to the place where he was living with this woman. Some months later, he's walking down the street and he sees this woman coming in another direction down there. He saw her, but she didn't seem so.

He cuts over to the other side of the street and is going down over there. Well, she caught, she saw him. She ran over to him, comes up to him, Augustine, Augustine.

He looks at her and he said, yes. And he says, Augustine, she said, what's wrong with you? It's me. Matilda or whatever name was, I can't remember that, but it's me.

And he looked at her and he said, well, you may be Matilda or whoever, but I'm not Augustine. Good day, ma'am. And he turned and he walked away.

That's somebody who truly wants victory. Somebody there that looks and says, I want out of this. This had power and it had authority over my life and I'm through with it.

I am done with it. I want to put as wide a berth between me and temptation and these things in my life and whatever it may be, if you have these things around and you also realize that I have a nature within me that loves them, it will always love them. And if I think I can just simply subdue the nature or say, hold on here, you know, control yourself.

You can't. And all I have to do to open it back up is just keep that eye open, keep that hand out. And Jesus said, cut the hand off, pluck the eye out.

And he says, if you want to be free and you want to walk with me and if you want to have this victory and we live in a day and age, at least according to Gallup poll, the virtually the same percent of secular homes that have adult channels. So also, according to Gallup poll, do Christian quote unquote Christian homes, which tells me that there's a lot of people that either lying or deceiving themselves and thinking they can handle somebody, they can handle it. If you can handle it, I mean, to me, I'm a Scotsman, I'm not going to pay for something I can't even handle.

I'm not even going to look at it. What are they paying for it for? They're not looking at it. And when we find yourself, Lord, set me free.

Set me free. And the wonderful thing is, is that we can flee it. And tonight we're going to close in a minute, but maybe tonight some of us just say, Lord, you know, my nature, you know, my nature.

I know my nature. Your your word says it. And you're right.

Your Bible's never lied to me yet. And it is lying to me now. And these things are things that are within me.

Who am I kidding? And Lord, I want to be free from them. But the freedom comes with fellowship. Walk in the spirit and you'll not fulfill the lust of the flesh.

Lord, fill me with your spirit. And then I want tomorrow I want to get up. I want to be in your word.

I want to be in your spirit. When I go to work, maybe tomorrow, some of you, there's somebody that you've got to look at and they'll come up and say, oh, hi, so and so. You may just have to look at them and say you will.

You might be so and so. But I'm not so and so. And that'll give them something to think about for a while.

But the. But it also give you something to think about, too. There may be, you know, some things that are in your heart, your life that the Lord would put his finger on tonight and say, cut this out.

Maybe, you know, some people to me that, you know, maybe you can go up and you can be a little touchy feely with people. And it's always just my I'm just a real touchy feely person. Well, the Bible says don't be touchy feely.

It's a good thing not to touch a woman. It's a good thing not to do that. I have one of my own.

And when I touch her, it's very nice. I like it. And by the way, you can't lust after your own.

Coveting is something there to want something that isn't yours. What God gives to you. And we'll look at this more next week.

What God has given you that he says, love this joy, what I've given you, but what is not yours. Don't play with it. Destroy you.

But they're the wonderful thing when we come and say, Lord, set me free and fill me with your love. Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your great desire and power, Lord, to help us and to strengthen us and to set us free.

And Lord, we pray that tonight as we look to your word that we would just admit it's true. And Lord, there may be an entirely different area even of the flesh that we would look at that we just read through. It wasn't even talked about tonight.

And yet the same time we look there and boy, that's true. It sure has a grip on me. How do I get free from it? You smile at us and you say it's easy.

Let me fill you. Let me fill you. And if you will, you'll be free.

And you and I together, when we see these things and we'll get rid of them, we'll deal with them. But you've got to decide whether you love me more than you love them. It's amazing, Jesus, you put us in this world and you let all these things be around that could chase us and draw us or seduce us.

And yet, Lord, you also look at you put yourself right in the middle of the mix, so to speak. You say, now choose. Here I am.

If there's something else you want more than me, you may have it. I won't keep you from it. But I also want to tell you, it'll destroy you.

It'll bring you to a heap and a mess, great sorrow. And Lord, you know us and you love us. Tonight, I pray that we just open our heart and be filled with you, with your love and with your strength, with your joy.

And Lord, that we would go out of here and on the way home, maybe you would even put together a little list, say, you know, let's do a little housecleaning when you get home. I'm so excited to get these other affairs of the heart out. So it's just us.

Lord, I pray that that is the desire we would have, such rich communion with you that everything else would go. So we thank you for your love, your deliverance, your word in Jesus name. Amen.

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