



“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8).

## Christian Integrity

**Lesson Subject:** A pure heart is needed in every area of life.

**L95. Date:** September 1983. **Text:** Matthew 5:27-37.

**Topic:** Jesus: Teachings of.

Jesus said, “*Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God*” (Matthew 5:8). That principle is illustrated in this study. The central theme of this lesson is, “A pure heart is needed in every area of life.”

The lesson text is set in that portion of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus is “fulfilling” the law. (To “fulfill” the law means to fill it full of its true spiritual application and meaning, to reveal clearly what the law means.) Jesus fulfilled the meaning of the law concerning sexual lust, marriage, divorce, and oaths.

This portion of the sermon must not be interpreted to say Moses meant one thing in the law but that Jesus gave it a different meaning. In the light of the Christian revelation, the fuller meaning of the law became evident in Jesus Christ. He is not changing the law by His interpretation. He is showing its full application to life.

The ancient philosopher Plato said the soul of man is like a charioteer who drives two horses. One horse is tame and under control of bridle and reign. His name is reason. The other horse is wild, flighty, and rebellious. His name is passion. To apply that analogy, Jesus taught that the law of God applies to both horses. God holds man responsible for both his acts of the body and his attitudes of the heart.

### I. SIN OF LUST (Matthew 5:27~30)

*“Thou shalt not commit adultery: . . . whosoever looketh on a woman*

*to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart”* (verses 27, 28).

**A. The act of sexual immorality is strictly forbidden in Holy Scripture** (verse 27). The seventh of the Ten Commandments reads, “*Thou shalt not commit adultery*” (Exodus 20:14). The matter is so serious that the death penalty was executed upon the guilty in ancient times (Leviticus 20:10~12). That law was remembered even in the days of Jesus (John 8:1-11).

The common interpretation of that law was that one must not do the act of adultery. Jesus expanded the law to attitude as well as act, and made it the more binding upon men.

**B. Entertaining the thoughts of sexual immorality is equally sinful** (verse 28). That application convicts us all at one point or another! Beware of misunderstanding at this point. God made humans so there is a natural attraction between male and female. That is not sinful and wrong when it is held in its proper place. The keys to Jesus' statement are the terms look and lust.

Jesus prohibits a man from looking at a woman with the deliberate intention of lusting after her. He pictures a man gazing, following a woman with his eyes, moving to get a better look, and “undressing her with his eyes” as one has expressed it. That is the use of the eyes to awaken, sustain, and deliberately stimulate lustful desire.

The Bible gives examples of sin which arose through lust by means of the eyes. Potiphar's wife “*cast her eyes upon Joseph*” before she sought to seduce him (Genesis 39:7). King David looked into his neighbor's property “*saw a woman . . . and the woman was very beautiful to look upon*” (II Samuel 11:2). Adultery with Bathsheba followed.

What is the application today? Reading books or magazines which promote indecency is prohibited. Wanton talk which excites passion is sin. Watching movies or television programs which are sexually suggestive and immodest violates this provision by Jesus. Like Job, let us make a covenant with our eyes (Job 31:1) to keep from sin. Keeping the eyes from corrupt gazing will keep the heart from defiling desires.

**C. Deny the function of any member which involves you in sin.** “*If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee. . . . And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee*” (verses 29, 30). What a frightful requirement! Surely Jesus did not mean what He said, did He? Would God approve the mutilation of our bodies?

The statements are not to be taken literally. Paul expresses the same idea when he writes, “*Mortify (put to death) therefore your members which*

*are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence” (Colossians 3:5).*

What does the “*eye*” and the “*hand*” mean? The eye is a figure of that which is most precious to us, for it has the function of giving sight to the body. The hand is a figure of that which is most useful to us, for it ministers in behalf of the whole body. Jesus is saying that which is of greatest value and benefit should be surrendered if it is necessary to keep us from sin.

Let a person change his recreation, his leisure activities, his associates, his place of employment, or whatever is necessary. Nothing is so precious or so profitable that it should be retained if it is the occasion of sin.

Why are there warnings that “*thy whole body should be cast into hell*” (verses 29, 30)? It might be that Jesus is simply using strong language to show the importance of what He says. But more likely, He is showing that an unrestrained thought life is the mark of the unregenerate (who will be cast into hell) and not of the child of God who has “*crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts*” (Galatians 5:24).

## II. SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE (Matthew 5:31, 32)

**A. God's intention is that marriage should be permanent for the life of the married partners.** He established marriage so that the two become “*one flesh*” in that holy union (Genesis 2:18-25). He never intended for marriage to be conveniently terminated by divorce (Matthew 19:8). We reflect that intention of God by our marriage vow. “*till death do us part.*”

God set the most solemn and serious offense as the cause for breaking the marriage bond: adultery. Marriage is more than a civil contract. It is spiritual and divine. God has the authority to set the rules concerning it.

**B. Man's interruption of marriage occurred when men did not live by God's standards.** In ancient times men were rejecting their wives and turning them out of their homes with no provision. To protect those innocent parties, God had Moses to write in the law a divorce proceeding. The husband who sent away his wife *must* “*write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand. . . . And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife*” (Deuteronomy 24:1, 2). The purpose of the “*bill of divorcement*” was to permit remarriage of the rejected wife.

Divorce was permitted in the Old Testament for any of three causes: uncleanness in a wife (Deuteronomy 24:1-4), religious apostasy (Ezra 10:2-14), and failure of a husband to provide food, raiment, and duty of marriage to his wife (Exodus 21:7-11). Adultery was not a cause for divorce because it carried the death penalty and would terminate the marriage (Deuteronomy

22:22; Leviticus 20:10). Divorce was impossible when a man accused his wife of immorality before marriage and the charge was proven false (Deuteronomy 22:13-19), and if a man seduced a virgin girl (Deuteronomy 22:23-30).

Jesus placed “*adultery*” and “*fornication*” as the bases for divorce (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). The “*except*” clause indicates this truth. He who divorces and marries another commits adultery. But if adultery has already occurred by one of the marriage partners, the innocent one may divorce and marry again without committing adultery.

Is there any distinction between “*fornication*” and “*adultery*” in Holy Scripture? Some understand fornication to be immorality before marriage and adultery to be immorality after marriage. Matthew 15:19 and Galatians 5:19 mention the two separately as if they are distinct. Yet in Revelation 2:20, 22, they are used interchangeably, and in Ezekiel 16:25-28 the “wife of Jehovah” is said to commit both sins. They are the same in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 but distinct in Matthew 15:19 and Mark 7:21. *Fornication* (from the Greek *porneia* (from which we get “pornography”) seems to be the larger word which refers to illicit sexual relations of any sort, while adultery may refer to immorality involving married persons.

God forbids sexual immorality of any kind between any persons. The marriage contract is so sacred one must keep himself pure in preparation for it and faithful after entering it.

### III. INTEGRITY OF SPEECH (Matthew 5:33-37)

“*Swear not at all*” (verse 34).

**A. God requires truth in speech** (verse 33). The Christian principle is, “*Putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another*” (Ephesians 4:25).

To assure that people spoke the truth, the Jews were accustomed to take oaths. The oaths were not only in courts of law, but in business transactions as well. Unlike our legal custom of swearing “so help me, God,” they swore by many things. They swore by their head, by the hairs of their head, by the temple, by the gold of the temple, by heaven, by earth, and other things. The value of the oath was determined by the value of the object by which the oath was made. Swearing by the gold of the temple, for instance, was more binding than swearing by the temple. An oath using the name of God was absolutely binding, while an oath evading the name of God was not as binding. Vows were recognized and approved as binding in the Bible (Exodus 20:7; Numbers 30:2; Deuteronomy 23:21, 22), but the people had

made all vows absurd by their abuse of the custom.

**B. All speech should be regulated by truth, whether an oath accompanies it or not.** It is not wrong to vow or take an oath, for even God himself took an oath in making promise to Abraham (Hebrews 6:13, 17-20). But vows should not be abused by men. Vows are required in man's dealing with man because men are evil. If every person spoke truth, an oath would not be necessary. The truly good man does not need to take an oath for "his word is his bond." The fact that oaths are necessary today proves that men are not all good.

Jesus' words "*Swear not at all*" (verse 34) do not mean it is irreligious or sinful to take an oath in a court of law. It means we are not to be required by oaths to do right or speak truth.

The Christian must speak so that his "Yes" means yes and his "No" means no. Deceitful speech is sin.

How can one be sure that he keeps free from lustful thoughts, adulterous acts, and impure speech? Let him keep his heart pure before God. Remember, "A pure heart is needed in every area of life."

*"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life"* (Proverbs 4:23).

## QUESTIONS

1. How does Matthew 5:8 provide a key to this study?
2. How does the lesson text show Jesus fulfilling the law'?
3. Why is sexual immorality a sin?
4. What does Matthew 5:28 mean in practical application?
5. What is the meaning of the sacrifice required in verses 29, 30?
6. How does that relate to Galatians 5:24 and Romans 8:12, 13?
7. What is God's intention of the permanence of marriage?
8. What is the solution of the divorce problem today?
9. What does Jesus teach about taking an oath?
10. How can you have the pure heart which the teaching requires'?