

Love from the Heart

Matthew 5:27-30

Part Two

Jesus reveals the true nature of sin as an act of God's generous grace.

The Heart of the Problem

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone" (Matthew 15:19-20).

"everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (v28).

"everyone who looks" Gk *blepo*; present, active, participle; with continuing action—the intentional, lingering look.

"lustful intent" Gk *epithumeo*; "in the mind. To have the affections directed toward something, to desire, long after."

A fire in the heart—

"If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened" (Psalm 66:18).

External Religious Behaviorism vs Internal Righteous Relationship

Christianity is fundamentally *a matter of the heart*.

The *Primacy* with God has always been *Relationship*.

The Scribes and Pharisees saw sin as something we *do*, so they viewed salvation and sanctification as something we do.

The whole purpose of the Law of Moses was two-fold:

- 1) To show the soaring heights of God's love in His relentless pursuit of relationship with man.
- 2) To show the plummeting depths of man's sin and his utter inability to keep the whole law of God.

Externalized Religion misses the heart and leads to Circling the Drain.

True Christian spirituality "is more than refraining from a certain external list of taboos in a mechanical way.... But we must see that in giving up such lists, in feeling the limitation of the 'list' mentality, we must not do this merely in order to be able to live a looser life: it must be for something deeper.... We do not come to true spirituality or the true Christian life merely by keeping a list, but neither do we come to it merely by rejecting the list and then shrugging our shoulders and living a looser life" (Schaeffer).

It is no use talking about deliverance from sin if we do not know what sin is.

The Pathology of Human Sin

The origin, the birth of every sin occurs *internally*.

“Sin is not merely a matter of actions and of deeds; it is something within the heart that leads to the action.... It is not the symptoms that matter but the disease, for it is the disease that kills and not the symptoms” (M. Lloyd-Jones).

“For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.... Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie...” (Romans 1:21, 24-25).

Covetousness: The Root of All Sin

The Law of Love

God gave us the Law so that we could see this about ourselves.

The epicenter of our sin problem is *internal*.

“Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet. But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead” (Romans 7:7-8).

Love is first internal.

If love truly exists internally for someone, it will ultimately be revealed outwardly with actions expressed through the body.

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

Those who say they know Jesus and yet willfully cherish sin in their hearts, “are a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4).

“By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother” (1 John 3:10).

Love always exists internally first, then is manifested outwardly in ways that God prescribes.

“Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him” (1 John 3:24).

“But if anyone has the world’s goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God’s love abide in him?” (1 John 3:17).

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome” (1 John 5:2-3).

The *external* manifestation (behavior) is a direct result of the true internal condition of the heart.

When we love other people, as God commands, we will not violate any part of the Law in their regard:

“Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.... Love does not wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:8, 10).

“I can take lists that men make and I can seem to keep them, but to do that, my heart does not have to be bowed.... When we talk of the Christian life or true spirituality, when we talk about freedom from the bonds of sin, we must be wrestling with the inward problems of not coveting against God and men, of loving God and men, and not merely some set of externals” (Schaeffer).

What does all this mean in relationships?

Living in a relationship according to an external *quid pro quo* (‘this for that’) arrangement does only two things and they are both wicked (and so, pleasing to Satan):

- 1) It perpetuates conflict (*circling the drain*).
- 2) It allows pride to remain intact.

Other examples of dealing with sin while avoiding the crucial heart work:

- ✓ Dealing with *pornography* addiction with external measures *only*.
- ✓ Dealing with *drunkenness* by not drinking alcohol.
- ✓ Dealing with *lust* by abstinence, or asceticism.
- ✓ Dealing with *gluttony* by going on a diet or putting a paddle lock on the fridge.
- ✓ Dealing with an *argumentative spirit*, a *critical spirit*, or a *complaining spirit*, by not talking.
- ✓ Dealing with a serious mess made in one place by moving to another location.
- ✓ Dealing with a sinning spouse by pressuring, nagging, yelling, or intimidating them into changing their behavior.
- ✓ Dealing with *laziness* by making a plan, writing out a ‘to do’ list, and following up on a few things.
- ✓ Dealing with *anger*, *fear*, or *jealousy* by mental redirection, distraction, or staying busy.

What do all of these methods have in common?

They are nothing more than behaviorism with a Christian veneer.

They do not penetrate the heart and so they leave pride unaffected.

“Sweeping out of the inward positive reality, there is to be a positive manifestation externally. It is not just that we are dead to certain things, but we are to love God, we are to be alive to him, we are to be in communion with him, *in this present moment of history*. And we are to love men, to be alive to men as men, and to be in communion on a true personal level with men, *in this present moment of history*” (Schaeffer, 17, emphasis original).

You cannot resolve a problem that is not accurately or fully identified.

The gospel is fundamentally a call to *repentance—from the heart!*