

Redefining Lust and Divorce

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[0 : 0 0] We're working our way through the Sermon on the Mount section where Jesus contrasts his teaching! with the teaching of the religious leaders. In those contrasts, Jesus gives the true interpretation! of the Old Testament scripture. Six examples in Matthew chapter 5 verses 21 through 48 build on the statement that Jesus made in verse 20 of that chapter, and Matthew 5 20 is where he said, For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Last week we saw how Jesus redefined anger.

Tonight we'll see how Jesus redefines lust and divorce. In both cases, Jesus emphasizes the sanctity of marriage by reminding us that attitudes can be as sinful as actions. That's the main idea for tonight. Jesus emphasizes the sanctity of marriage by reminding us that attitudes can be as sinful as actions. So let's read Matthew chapter 5 verses 27 through 32. Jesus said, You have heard it said, You shall not commit adultery, but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with a lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away, for it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away, for it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell. It was also said, Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce. But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. I rarely use examples from my own life, but this passage seems to require one.

As you evaluate what the study says against what the scriptures say, you need to understand my personal situation regarding lust and divorce. I want you to know my situation just in case the teaching fails to come across as compassionately as I intend for it to. My father was divorced before he married my mother, and without dad's divorce and second marriage, I realized I wouldn't be here tonight. I believe that my dad had biblical grounds for that divorce, but he also lived with the pain caused by adultery and divorce. Despite the circumstances, dad was ostracized by much of his family because of the divorce and its subsequent ramifications. At least one family member insinuated that my physical challenges were God's punishment on my dad for the divorce.

So those things and others led dad to request that nobody on his side of the family be told about his death until after the funeral. Yet my parents' marriage is also an example of how God can bless second marriages. They were married for more than 54 years, and their marriage showed that God does indeed bless people affected by adultery and divorce. Some of us have yet to be affected by adultery and divorce. However, we all know somebody who has been affected by those. Always remember that adultery and divorce, even divorces on unbiblical grounds, are forgivable by God. Because God forgives repentant sinners, we're also called to forgive them and to let God's love shine through us. We saw that earlier in the Sermon on the Mount. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 5.16. Jesus said, In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. We'll cover tonight's verses in three sections, starting with verses 27 and 28.

[4 : 1 9] In those verses, we see adultery redefined. Adultery redefined. You may notice that the title of this lesson says, Redefining Lust, but this section's heading is Adultery Redefined. Both fit because Jesus defines lust as adultery. Then he also redefines adultery as more than just a physical act.

So listen to verses 27 and 28 again. He said, You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

We know from last week that whenever Jesus says, You have heard that it was said, or something similar, he's referring to the teaching of the religious leaders of the day. Were the religious leaders correct to say, you shall not commit adultery? Yes, they were. That wording itself was correct. That comes directly from Exodus chapter 20, verse 14. Exodus chapter 20, verse 14 says, You shall not commit adultery. Matthew 5, 28, though, is where Jesus brings in the contrast between the religious leaders' teaching and what the seventh commandment fully means. Once again, he said in verse 28, I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. The religious leaders limited adultery to the physical act. Jesus reminds us that sin starts with the motive of our hearts. That teaching matches what he taught about murder in verses 21 through 26. Consider how Jesus' teaching on murder that we studied last week fits with this week's passage. The sixth commandment protects the sanctity of life. The seventh commandment protects the sanctity of marriage. Those who rely on external righteousness break both of those commandments. In their hearts, they attack the sanctity of life and sanctity of marriage, whether they do so outwardly or not. When they're angry or hate, they commit murder. When they lust sexually, they commit adultery.

[6 : 32] And when they do either of those things, they choose to despise God's law and God's name. Anger and lust are two of the most powerful influences on humans. Every person has experienced temptation to anger and to sexual sin, and every person has at some time or to some degree given into those temptations. Because of that, every person is guilty before God of murder and of adultery, based on what Jesus says here. Self-righteous Christians often have looked with disdain upon those who have committed the sins of murder or adultery. When we face the fact that all of us are guilty before God of having unrighteous anger or by thinking about adultery, that should eliminate our desire to judge others. Instead, it should drive us to show compassion toward those who've committed such acts and who have repented. We spent some time last week looking at Old Testament scriptures, proving that God cares about attitudes as much as he cares about actions and appearances.

We'll only revisit one of those verses tonight. Here is 1 Samuel 16, verse 7. Remember, this was when Samuel was picking out the new king, and it says, But the Lord said to Samuel, Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. We face a lot of sexual temptation today. However, that's not new.

All societies have faced similar temptations, including the cultures of Old and New Testament times. Sinful human nature always tries to separate attitudes and actions.

Listen to what Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 6.13. The first part of the verse quotes a common Greek saying, and that saying was, Food is meant for the stomach, and the stomach for food.

The full verse says, Food is meant for the stomach, and the stomach for food. And God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

[8 : 49] The common Greek notion was that biological functions are just biological functions that have no moral significance. It was a belief that many of the Christian and Corinthian believers reverted to, and had never given up in some cases, and they used it to justify their sexual misconduct.

Apparently they were arguing, as many do today, that sex is simply a biological act no different morally from eating, drinking, or sleeping. We know that believers are held to a higher standard both in attitudes and actions.

For Christians, our body is a member of Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit that belongs to the Lord rather than us. It is never to be used for any purpose that dishonors God, and we need to be reminded that God dwells within our body.

Christians should have only one response to sexual temptation, and that is running away from it. The teaching of Jesus refers to unlawful sex outside of marriage, whether practiced by married or unmarried people.

Jesus here actually alludes to all forms of immorality. His emphasis is that any and every sexual practice which is immoral also is immoral in look and thought.

[10 : 07] The connection between the eyes and the heart leads Jesus to give some very practical instruction about how to maintain sexual purity. We'll see that as we get into the second section of

the lesson.

That second section covers Matthew 5, verses 29 and 30. The verses show us the action required to deal with sinful thoughts and actions. So, action required is your next blank.

The context of verses 29 and 30 applies to sexual sin. However, the action can be applied to any sin.

Jesus said in those verses, If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.

And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell. Throughout history, people have done horrible things to themselves and others because they've misapplied these two verses.

[11:15] If we look at these verses literally, all Christian adults would be missing body parts by now. In these verses, Jesus is using illustrations common to his day to show how seriously his followers must fight the temptation to sin.

Listen to this quote from Dwight Pentecost. He said, Our Lord was not teaching physical mutilation. The removal of an eye or amputation of a hand will never change the lustful desire of the heart.

A blind man who is a paraplegic could have just as much of a problem with lust as any other individual. Physical mutilation will never solve the problem. What our Lord was saying was to remove the cause, and the cause of adultery is an adulterous heart.

The cause of lust is a lustful heart. The lustful heart's response to an occasion produces the act. We must go to the root, the old nature within us.

With the understanding that Jesus is speaking figuratively about plucking out an eye or cutting off a hand, let's consider how his audience would have viewed the illustration. In Jewish culture, the right eye and the right hand represented a person's best and most precious physical attributes.

[12:32] The right eye represented the best vision, and the right hand the best skills. Jesus' point here is that we should be willing to give up whatever is necessary, even the most cherished things we possess, if doing that will help protect us from evil.

Nothing is so valuable as to be worth preserving at the expense of righteousness. So the intent of these words is simply to call for dramatic severing of sinful impulses, and those sinful impulses then are what push us to evil action.

So if we can stop those impulses, we can avoid the action. When armies of Jesus' day captured soldiers from the opposition, the armies sometimes would gouge out the right eye and cut off the right hand of their prisoners.

Those prisoners then would be much less of a threat. Through his illustration, Jesus is calling us to take dramatic action against those things that tempt us to think about sin.

I see Mike smiling back there. I'm sure that's because he's left-handed. You'll just need to think about it in terms of left-handers as well. Some of you in those verses may have a translation that translates the word sin as stumble.

[13:43] Does anybody have a translation that says, if your right eye causes you to stumble or if your right hand causes you to stumble? Well, the word there is really translated very well in that translation because the word basically means to cause to fall.

And the same word was often used of the bait stick that springs the trap when an animal touches it. Anything that morally or spiritually traps us that causes us to fall into sin or to stay in sin should be eliminated quickly and totally.

Jesus' teaching about sin being connected to the eyes and heart was considered radical when he first taught it. The religious leaders and even the people should have known better because, as always, Jesus' teaching was consistent with the Old Testament.

Listen to Job's words from Job chapter 31 verses 1 through 10. Again, these are Job chapter 31 verses 1 through 10.

Job said, I have made a covenant with my eyes. How then could I gaze at a virgin? What would be my portion from God above and my heritage from the Almighty on high?

[14:52] Is not calamity for the unrighteous and disaster for the workers of iniquity? Does not he see my ways and number all my steps? If I have walked with falsehood and my foot has hastened to deceit, let me be weighed in a just balance and let God know my integrity.

If my step is turned aside from the way and my heart is gone after my eyes, and if any spot has stuck to my hands, then let me sow and another eat, and let what grows for me be rooted out.

If my heart has been enticed toward a woman, and I have lain in wait at my neighbor's door, then let my wife grind for another and let others bow down on her. Here's a quote from John Stott about the connection between the eyes and the heart.

He said, This teaching of Jesus, confirmed in the experience of Job, is still true today. Deeds of shame are preceded by fantasies of shame, and the inflaming of the imagination by the indiscipline of the eyes.

Our vivid imagination, one of many faculties which distinguish humans from animals, is a precious gift of God. None of the world's art and little of man's noblest achievement would have been possible without it.

[16:06] Imagination enriches the quality of life, but all God's gifts need to be used responsibly. They can readily be downgraded and degraded and abused.

This is certainly true of our imagination. Here's a quote from Martin Lloyd-Jones that also puts things into perspective. He said, Do we all realize that the most important thing we must do in this world is prepare ourselves for eternity?

There is no question about that. This is not in any way to detract from the importance of life in this world. It is important. It is God's world, and we are to live a full life here.

Yes, but only as those who are preparing themselves for eternity and for the glory that awaits us.

How sadly we neglect the culture of the soul. How negligent we are about our eternal destiny.

We are also very concerned about this life, but are we equally concerned about our soul and spirit and our eternal destiny? That is the question our Lord is asking us. It is tragic that we are so negligent about the eternal and so concerned about that which must inevitably come to an end.

[17:18] If we have eternity in mind, we should approach any sin as Jesus teaches here. The illustrations Jesus used must have been some of his favorites because he said similar words in Matthew chapter 18, verses 7 through 9.

In those verses, he also referenced feet. So listen to Matthew 18, 7 through 9. Jesus said, And if your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.

It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.

It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire. So you can see there, that's where he brought the lefties in too. He didn't specify which eye, which hand or which foot.

What he's talking about there though is that mortification rather than mutilation is the path to holiness. Mortification or taking up the cross to follow Christ means to reject sinful practices so resolutely that we die to them or put them to death figuratively.

[18:36] So what does this involve in practice? Well, it means don't look. It means to behave as if you actually plucked out your eyes and had thrown them away. And you are now blind so that you could not see the objects which previously caused you to sin.

So if your hand or foot causes you to sin because temptation comes your way through those hands, things you do, or through your feet, the places you visit, then cut them off figuratively.

In other words, don't do it. Don't go. Behave as if you'd actually cut off your hands and feet and had flung them away and were now so crippled you couldn't do the things or visit the places that previously caused you to sin.

And that's the real meaning of mortification there. So we've made it through some tough verses, but we still have two more tough ones to cover. So far we've seen adultery redefined and action required.

In verses 31 and 32, we see adultery revisited. Adultery revisited is your last section. Jesus revisits adultery in the context of divorce.

[19:45] So here are verses 31 and 32 again. Jesus said, It was also said, Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.

But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

The many confused and conflicting ideas in our day about the biblical teaching on divorce are not caused by any deficiency in God's revelation, but by the fact that sin has clouded men's minds to the straightforward simplicity about what God has said.

The harmful effects of divorce on children, parents, and on the family and society would be more than enough reason to be concerned about the problem. But the supreme tragedy of divorce is that it often violates God's word.

For couples considering divorce, we should encourage reconciliation. However, in those cases where reconciliation is impossible for various reasons, divorce may be necessary.

[20 : 52] Even if the divorce qualifies as a sin, we must also remember that God forgives sinners. Let's consider some various views on divorce and then look at what the Bible says.

Only four basic interpretations of the biblical teaching on divorce and remarriage are possible. All four are found in various Christian circles.

The strictest view is that divorce is not permissible under any circumstance or for any reason. The opposite position on the other end contends that both divorce and remarriage are permissible for any reason.

The other two views are in between those extreme. One is that divorce is permitted under certain circumstances, but remarriage is never permitted. The other is that both divorce and remarriage are permitted under certain circumstances.

The Bible actually teaches only one of those four possibilities. That view is taught by Jesus here in Matthew chapter 5, verses 31 and 32.

[21 : 53] Like many people today, the Jews of Jesus' day, typified by the scribes and Pharisees, had developed their own standards for divorce and remarriage, which they taught as if they were God's standards.

In this passage, Jesus continues to correct the doctrines and practices of the religious tradition and to replace them with the actual truth. You probably have deduced my view that the Bible teaches the fourth view, and that is that both divorce and remarriage are possible under certain circumstances.

If you reach a different conclusion, just remember that even with the strictest possible interpretation, divorce is still a sin that can be forgiven by God, and it is a sin that is forgiven by God.

Throughout the various lessons on the Sermon on the Mount, we have heard from James Montgomery Boyce often. Boyce held to a stricter interpretation of Jesus' teaching on divorce, but he also emphasized that divorce and subsequent remarriage are forgivable sins if we consider them sins.

So listen to this voice quote. He said, Even divorce and remarriage, serious though they are, are forgivable. God is always able to start with his children precisely where they are and bring blessing.

[23 : 07] The churches never should be closed to divorced and remarried people. Christians above all should show mercy. Perhaps even if such persons marry in rebellion against God's will, he may bring repentance, and he may yet greatly bless the new home.

As with any sin, churches should be a welcoming place for the truly repentant. We should show mercy to divorced and remarried people whom God calls his own. To set more context for Jesus' teaching, let's look at how the Jewish culture viewed divorce.

In Jesus' day, the dominant rabbinic position on divorce and remarriage was the most liberal of the four views that we talked about earlier, and that was permissibility on any grounds.

The only requirement was giving a certificate of dismissal. Divorce had become so easy and casual that a man could dismiss his wife for such trivial things such as burning his meal or embarrassing him in front of his friends.

Often, the husband didn't even bother to give a reason because none was required. The rabbinic justification for easy divorce was based upon a flawed interpretation of Deuteronomy 24, verses 1-4, and that's where the Bible first mentions a certificate of dismissal.

[24 : 27] So let's listen to Deuteronomy 24, verses 1-4. Those verses say, when a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, and the latter man hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter man dies who took her to be his wife, then the former husband who sent her away may not take her again to be his wife after she has been defiled, for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring sin upon the land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance.

That passage shows how improper divorce leads to adultery, which results in defilement. Through Moses, God recognized and permitted divorce under certain circumstances when it was accompanied by a certificate, but he did not condone or command divorce.

God's permission for divorce was another accommodation of his grace to human sin. The certificate did not make the divorce right, but only gave the woman some legal protection.

It protected her reputation from slander and provided proof of her legal freedom from her former husband and her consequent right to remarry. The meaning of the word indecency in Deuteronomy 24, verse 1, includes every kind of improper, shameful, or indecent behavior that's unbecoming to a woman and embarrassing to her husband except for adultery.

And why do we say except for adultery there? Well, it cannot refer to adultery because death was the penalty for adultery, even if the adultery occurred during the engagement period.

[26 : 24] That comes from Leviticus 20.10, and Deuteronomy 22, verses 22-24. Leviticus 20.10 says, If a man commits adultery with the wife of his neighbor, both the adulterer and the adulteress should be put to death.

Deuteronomy 22, verses 22-24 say, If a man is found lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman and the woman.

so you shall purge the evil from Israel. If there is a betrothed virgin and a man meets her in the city and lies with her, then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city and you shall stone them to death with stones.

The young woman because she did not cry for help though she was in the city and the man because he violated his neighbor's wife. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. Do you see how the biblical penalties prescribed for adultery were stricter than what the religious leaders were teaching?

The religious leaders had no doubt that Jesus taught a stricter interpretation. Flip over to Matthew chapter 19, verses 3-9. Matthew chapter 19, verses 3-9 documents a later exchange between the Pharisees and Jesus.

[27 : 44] Starting in verse 3, it says, And Pharisees came up to him, speaking of Jesus, and tested him by asking, Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?

He answered, Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female and said, Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh?

So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let not man separate. They said to him, Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?

He said to them, Because of your hardness of heart, Moses allowed you to divorce your wives. But from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife except for sexual immorality and marries another commits adultery.

In tonight's passage and in the Matthew 19 cross-reference that we just read, Scripture has a much broader interpretation of sin than the religious leaders did. Rather than making divorce more permissible, Jesus limited where divorce is permitted.

[28 : 57] This broader definition of sin is consistent with what we have seen throughout the Sermon on the Mount. He's reminding us again that attitudes are just as important as actions and even those actions can be sins beyond what has been taught by the religious leaders.

Even on the grounds of adultery, divorce was tolerated in the law of Moses only as a gracious alternative to the capital punishment that adultery justly deserved.

However, the most popular school of rabbinic tradition in Jesus' day interpreted Moses' words in Deuteronomy 24, verse 1 as a command. In other words, what God had provided as a reluctant permission had been turned by the religious leaders into a legal right.

Jesus confronted the religious leaders with a proper interpretation of God's law. He said that every time a man without proper cause turned his wife loose to remarry, he forced her into adultery and that made him guilty also.

The man who married the former wife and the woman who married the former husband were likewise guilty of adultery. The condition, except for adultery, is the only grounds for divorce that God will recognize.

[30 : 10] The permissions for divorce in the Old Testament were designed to meet the practical, unique problems of an imperfect, sinful people. God never condoned divorce because what he joins

together is not to be separated by man.

Adultery, another reality that God never intended, is the only thing that can break the bond of marriage. Under the Old Testament law, adultery would dissolve a marriage because the guilty party was put to death and when a spouse dies, then a person is free to remarry.

Sometime, though, during Israel's history, divorce was allowed to take the place of execution as a legitimate punishment and penalty for adultery. No Old Testament passage specifically authorized divorce, but that does not mean that God never gave specific revelation about it.

Based on God's own recognition and regulation of divorce and his divorce of Israel and Judah in Jeremiah 3, verse 8, we can assume that divine instructions for divorce had been given orally or by some written instruction that was not preserved in Scripture.

God divorced Israel and Judah for spiritual adultery rather than put the entire nations to death. Also, think about the New Testament Joseph. We're told that he's a righteous man and he was prepared to divorce Mary rather than stone her for her presumed adultery.

[31 : 33] So we know at some point God started allowing divorce as a legitimate punishment for adultery instead of death and God in his mercy chose not to enforce the death penalty.

Apart from the death penalty, divorce became the divine alternative tolerated only because of the hardness of the human heart as what Jesus said in Matthew 19, verse 8 that we read earlier.

Consider, though, the mercy that's involved because Jesus himself modeled mercy toward an adulterer. Flip over to John chapter 8 verses 3 through 11.

John chapter 8 verses 3 through 11. You'll recognize this passage if you don't already know where I'm going. Starting in verse 3 of John 8, it says, The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and placing her in the midst they said to him, Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery.

Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say? This they said to test him that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground and as they continued to ask him he stood up and said to them, Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.

[32 : 55] And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground but when they heard it they went away one by one beginning with the older ones and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him.

Jesus stood up and said to her, Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? She said, No one, Lord. And Jesus said, Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.

So through his teaching Jesus upheld God's higher standard for conduct. At the same time though he also showed mercy to someone who failed to live up to that standard.

Jesus sets the record straight that God still hates divorce and that his ideal is still monogamous lifelong marriage but as a concession to sin and as a gracious provision for those who are guilty of defiling the marriage and especially for those who are innocent of defiling the marriage he allows divorce on the single ground of adultery.

So what if someone divorced a spouse and later remarried someone else under circumstances different than what Jesus permits here? The answer from nearly all commentators who trust regardless of their viewpoint on divorce and remarriage is that the couple should honor the current marriage and go forward from there.

[34 : 13] Remember the end of the voice quote that we heard earlier. He said, perhaps even if such persons marry in rebellion against God's will he may bring repentance and he may yet greatly bless the new home.

Jesus would likely say to repentant people who were unbiblically divorced and remarried the same thing that he said to the woman caught in adultery and that of course is neither do I condemn you go and from now on sin no more.

As said earlier we should encourage struggling couples to seek reconciliation. However, when reconciliation is impossible God permits divorce in the case of adultery and even if a divorce fails to meet that standard God still forgives that sin.

We have to remember that the only unforgivable sin is rejecting Christ. Remember the main idea. Jesus emphasizes the sanctity of marriage by reminding us that attitudes can be as sinful as actions.

With that in mind here are a couple more quotes from Martin Lloyd-Jones. He said we must realize that the ideal situation is to have a clean and pure heart a heart that is free from lust.

[35 : 31] Rather than just avoiding certain actions our hearts should become pure. We come back again to the Beatitudes blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.

Our standard must always be a positive one. We must never think of holiness merely in terms of avoiding certain things. Every type of holiness teaching which simply ends at that which tells us not to do certain things for a certain period in the year is always negative.

The true teaching however is always positive. Of course we must avoid certain things but the Pharisees were expert at that and they stopped there. No, says our Lord you must aim at a heart that is clean and pure.

The only way to understand the New Testament doctrine of salvation is to start with the doctrine of sin. Whatever else sin may be it is at least something that could be dealt with only by the coming of the eternal Son of God from heaven into this world and by his going to the death of the cross.

That had to happen there was no other way. God would never have allowed his only begotten beloved Son to suffer in the way he did unless it was absolutely essential and it was essential because of sin.

[36 : 47] When we talk about the doctrine of sin the doctrine of sin must always start by preaching the law and that means we must explain that mankind is confronted by the holiness of God by God's demands and also by the consequences of our sins.

The Son of God himself speaks about being cast into hell. We saw that at least twice tonight. So if you don't like the doctrine of hell you're disagreeing with Jesus Christ.

Evangelism must start with the holiness of God the sinfulness of man the demands of the law and the punishment that will be handed out by the law and the eternal consequences of evil and wrongdoing.

Only the man who is brought to see his guilt in this way flies to Christ for deliverance and redemption. So this of course is another Martin Lloyd Jones quote that we're in the middle of and he goes on to say you can have a psychological belief even in the Lord Jesus Christ but a true belief sees in him one who delivers us from the curse of the law.

So once again listen to that you can have a psychological belief even in the Lord Jesus Christ but a true belief sees in him one who delivers us from the curse of the law. True evangelism starts like that and obviously is the primary call to repentance repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

[38 : 11] All who are trusting in their own efforts are denying the gospel. The reason for that is always that they have never seen themselves as sinners or understood the New Testament doctrine of sin.

This is a crucial matter. Remember what we saw in the Beatitudes earlier too. Jesus said blessed are those who mourn and we talked about how that's mourning over sin and you can see how he is bringing his audience back to mourning as he goes through the sermon and that will make us realize our need for him.

Earlier in the lesson we cross-referenced the latter part of 1 Corinthians 6. Listen to some of the verses leading up to those cross-references. These verses are 1 Corinthians 6 verses 9 through 11. They say or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who practice homosexuality nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor revilers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

And such were some of you that you were washed you were sanctified you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the spirit of our God.

[39 : 33] We can substitute ourselves in that last verse and we should substitute ourselves in that last verse whenever we start to think that we might be better than somebody else regardless of what that other person's sins might be.

So after that long list of sins in verses 9 and 10 we can say and such were some of us but we were washed we were sanctified we were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the spirit of our God.

When we see how much God hates sin we can begin to appreciate what God and his only begotten son did to rescue believers from their sins. Here's one last Martin Lloyd Jones quote for the night.

He said only as we see what sin really is in the sight of God do we realize that nevertheless God sacrificed his only son who willingly took our place.

That helps us begin to understand and to measure his love. If you want to love God more grasp this doctrine of sin. As you realize what it meant to God and what he has done about it you will see that his love is indeed so amazing and so divine.

[40 : 45] John 3 16 is so well loved because it's true. Of course Jesus said there for God so loved the world that he gave his only son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

Let's pray. Father we thank you for the reminder about how seriously you take sins not just sins of adultery and divorce but any sin.

Help us develop the attitude to deal with sin and the temptation to sin like you tell us here in this passage. Also help us be compassionate to those who have fallen into sin.

Help us show them the way to true redemption and help us be welcoming to them when they truly repent. Be with us as we try to apply this to our lives and we thank you that you sent your son to die for us.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen. Amen.