

ADULTERY IS A KILLER NOT A THRILLER!

Today's Text: (a) Proverbs Chaps 5-7; (b) Matt. 5: 27-32

Extracts:

- 1. Can a man take fire to his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be seared? So is he who goes in to his neighbour's wife. Whoever touches her shall not be innocent.... Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding. He who does so destroys his own soul. Wounds and dishonour he will get, and his reproach will not be wiped away [Prov. 6: 27-29, 32-33]**
- 2. You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart [Matt. 5: 27-28]**

In late September 2004, The American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) began airing a new show called "Desperate Housewives." It features 4 middle-aged women who were unhappy with their roles as wives and mothers and felt that they needed excitement outside of the home. The greater part of their new escapades involves extramarital affairs, which in the layperson's language means adultery. The show comes on during prime time (7-9 p.m.) on Sundays. By mid-October, the show had begun to attract strong ratings, nearly 21 million viewers. However, some groups, such as the American Family Association and the Traditional Values Coalition, have rallied against the show on the grounds that it "negatively depicts family values." As a result, the show has already begun to lose sponsors.¹ Without advertisers to sponsor it, ABC will one day be forced to drop it.

If the word of God says that adultery is a killer, like its related sexual sins, such as fornication and homosexuality, why do people treat it as a thriller? What particularly makes adultery unique among the sexual sins for God to seriously frown at it? How can we avoid or get out of the practice of adultery? These are some of the issues that we shall discuss in today's lesson.

¹ Erin Curry, 'Culture Digest: ABC's "Housewives" Losing Sponsors,' www.crosswalk.com/fun/1291903.html?view

1. Adultery is not a civil rights issue!

Sexual immorality manifests in three main forms: fornication, adultery and homosexuality. All three forms apply such deviant tools as masturbation, pornography (through magazines, movies or videos, Internet), bestiality (sexual relations with animals) or pedophilia (sex with children).

When two *consenting* adults who are not married or divorced have sexual relations, it is called fornication. One form of the practice is when lovers live together in a trial marriage or singles get involved in premarital sex. If such people give up the practice or get married properly, they can re-establish good standing with God.

In homosexuality, two *consenting* adults of the same sex engage in sexual relations. This practice has turned into a civil rights movement in the Western world where they now want to equate same-sex marriage with past movements to abolish discrimination against women and minorities! However, in the sight of God, the right to sin can never be a civil right question. Homosexuality is an abomination that was punished with death and destruction in Sodom and Gomorrah [**Gen. 19: 1-13, 27-28**]. Why should God treat it differently today?

Adultery merits closer scrutiny because it is closely tied to the integrity of marriage. In the eyes of God, adultery is sexual relations between a spouse and another person who is not his/her spouse. When God created the birds, beasts and other creatures, He blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful and multiply” [**Gen. 1: 23**]. However, when it came to creating man, He did something different. First, He made man in His own image and likeness, that is, a spirit being with the ability “to know good and evil” [**Gen. 3: 22**]. Second, God created man male and female [**Gen. 1: 27-28**], and instituted marriage **between** them as the framework within which they were to be fruitful and multiply [**Gen. 2: 18-25**]. Therefore, God regards sexual relations to be good *as long as they are practised within the marriage*. This is well established in the following general principles of marriage [**1 Cor. 7: 1-5**]:

It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his own wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

If a couple can follow those principles in their daily living, where is the room for divorce or adultery? That is why God hates divorce [**Mal.2: 15-16**]. In God's eyes, adultery violates the following spiritual principles:

a) *A vow cannot be broken!*

The word of God says, "if a man makes a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, *he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth*" [**Num. 30: 2**]. In like manner, if a woman "vowed in her husband's house, or bound herself by an agreement with an oath, *and her husband heard it, and made no response to her and did not overrule her*, then all her vows shall stand, and every agreement by which she bound herself shall stand" [**vv. 10-11**].

On their wedding day, the man and his wife shared some vows in the presence of many witnesses-the priests, family, friends and guests. They both vowed to love and be faithful to each other and to remain married "till death do us part." They both signed a wedding certificate as the testimony of the perpetual agreement between husband and wife. Reiterating the point, Jesus told the Pharisees, "So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no man separate" [**Matt. 19: 6**].

What then does adultery do? It breaks this vow of faithfulness between a man and his wife. The offending party has given his/her body to a stranger without the consent of the offended party who has the spiritual authority over the offender's body. Yet, a vow cannot be broken. Can you now see how serious a sin that adultery can be?

b) *Adultery is the moral equivalent of idolatry!*

Each time God wanted to remind the people of Israel how unfaithful they were to Him, He would use the metaphor of human adultery. For example, through the mouth of Ezekiel the prophet, God said to them, "You are an adulterous wife, who takes strangers instead of her husband. Men make payment to all harlots, but you made your payments to all your lovers, and hired them to come to you from all around for your harlotry" [**Ezek. 16: 32-33**]. God commanded Hosea the prophet to marry a prostitute, Gomer, who continued with her trade after marriage, to illustrate the degree of unfaithfulness that the people of Israel exhibited towards their God [**Hos. 1: 2-11**].

Marriage represents the relationship between Christ and His church [**Eph. 5: 32**]. As Christ is the head of the church, so is the husband the head of his wife [v. 23]. If the head and the body do not work together in harmony, there will be confusion. Will Christ ever be unfaithful to His church?

Never! Why then should the church be unfaithful to Him? In like manner, adultery by a husband or his wife removes Christ's protection over their marriage. They become idol worshippers of pleasure!

2. Adultery kills!

You will hardly find somebody who loves to kill innocent people or condone corruption or stealing. Otherwise, they will go to jail. For example, when an American medical doctor, Jack Kevorkian, tried to popularize suicide (encouraging people that are terminally ill to choose suicide), he was arrested, tried and imprisoned without parole. Yet, when Hollywood glamorizes adultery as it did with the movie, *The Graduate* (1967) and the ABC show, *Desperate Wives* (2004), there is a loud sound of silence from the law enforcement agencies. So, because sexual immorality has been decriminalized in most Western societies, we have come under the mistaken impression that whatever is legal should also be morally acceptable. Abortion (murder), adultery (unfaithfulness) and homosexuality (sodomy) enjoy legal protection. Same-sex marriages are knocking on the door!

The world can have its say but God will always have His way. His word tells us that adultery is a killer, not a thriller. Here is a sample of what adultery can cost us:

a) *Public disgrace*

Adulterers operate on the slippery rule that they may never be caught but the word of God says that our sins will *surely* find us out [**Num. 32: 23**]. An adulterer/adulteress will get "wounds and dishonour" [**Prov. 6: 33**].

In spite of his solid record of economic prosperity for America during his presidency (1993-2000), Bill Clinton is remembered more for his adulterous affair with a White House intern, Monica Lewinsky, for which Congress impeached him. Kobe Bryant, one of the leading stars in American basketball, faced the humiliation on television of admitting adultery with a hotel maid in Colorado where he had gone for a knee surgery. He has since lost his multimillion-dollar endorsement contracts because he is no longer seen as a role model for young people. Recently, police caught a professor at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine Campus (Trinidad) naked and drunk in a parked car with a 20-year old student. They called the girl's parents and the professor's wife. Now, he faces disciplinary measures from his employers.

b) *Physical death*

Under the Law of Moses, adulterers when caught were to be stoned to death [**Lev. 20: 10-12**]. This is still being done under *Shari'ah* law among

Moslems. Even outside of those settings, an offended party can kill his/her offending partner for “he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will accept no recompense, nor will he be appeased though you give many gifts” [**Prov. 6: 34-35**]. If a man were caught in the act, an arrow would strike “his liver, as a bird hastens to the snare (for) he did not know that it would cost him his life” [**Prov. 7: 23**]. How many such killings do we read about in local newspapers each day?

In addition to vengeance-related deaths, an adulterer may catch sexually transmitted diseases (STD) from outside and bring the infection to his/her innocent spouse at home. For example, a pastor who had been married and faithful for 20 years reportedly yielded to a one-night stand with a single girl in his church choir during a pastoral mission. He caught HIV/AIDS that he then passed on to his innocent wife. It was only at his deathbed that he confessed his indiscretion. Can you imagine what he has caused his faithful wife and family?

c) *Spiritual death*

Those who are engulfed in adultery are playing with fire “for the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and He ponders all his paths. His own iniquities entrap the wicked man, and he is caught in the cords of his sin. He shall die for lack of instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray” [**Prov. 5: 21-23**]. Spiritual separation from God is a form of death because “to be carnally minded is death” [**Rom. 7: 6**].

David experienced spiritual death after committing adultery with Bathsheba. Otherwise, how do you explain it that the man after God’s own heart did not repent of his adultery but went on to arrange the death of the woman’s husband to cover up his sin? Why did he confess only after God had sent the prophet Nathan to bring it to his attention? [**2 Sam. Chaps 11-12**]. David was behaving like “an adulterous woman (who) eats and wipes her mouth, and says, ‘I have done no wickedness’” [**Prov. 30: 20**]! Those who have killed their consciences have put themselves in a state of moral insensitivity, which is spiritual death.

d) *Exclusion from the church and God’s kingdom*

What happens to adulterers (and in deed all sinners) who are unrepentant but continue to pollute the body of Christ with their sins and bad example? Paul says that such people should be thrown out of your congregation “for what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? But those who are outside God judges. Therefore, put away from yourselves the evil person” [**1 Cor. 5: 9-15**].

One congregation in Trinidad is currently in turmoil because the church has not been bold enough to discipline a pastor who had been proven to be having an adulterous affair with four married women in that church.

If adulterous people die unrepentant, they do not need any visas to go straight to hell because “neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor *adulterers*, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ... will inherit the kingdom of God” [**1 Cor. 6: 9,10**]. The unrepentant adulterer is on “the way to hell, descending to the chambers of death” [**Prov. 7: 27**].

3. Conclusion: There is hope!

Contrary to your understanding, *most of us are* adulterers. If you are not doing it *physically* (such as actually having an affair with somebody other than your spouse), you may be doing it *technically* (such as lusting in your heart after others or getting involved in masturbation, phone or Internet sex, etc.). Now that you know better, it is high time you ran away from it. Consider the following steps:

- ❑ Do stocktaking of your marriage. Is it in line with God’s definition of a spiritual marriage? What are the enabling factors (those that make your spouse sexually sufficient for you)? What are the challenging factors (those tempting you to look outside)?
- ❑ If you find that you have committed adultery, physically or in your heart, confess your sin and ask God for forgiveness. Jesus told the woman caught in adultery, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more” [**Jn 8: 11**]. Be transformed through renewing your mind [**Rom. 12: 2**] and acquire the mind of Christ [**1 Cor. 2: 16**].
- ❑ “Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth” [**Prov. 5: 15-20**]. If you invest in the sexual aspects of your marriage, you will reap the benefits of fidelity and mutual respect. Retool and refit your sex-life, the same way that you would maintain a *Rolls Royce* car! No matter the latest model of other cars, you can’t beat an old Royce!
- ❑ Above all, restore the role and position of Christ as the head of your home and marriage.

Adultery is a choice that you can also discard at any time, *if and when you choose*. As long as you see it as a thriller, you may fall in love with it. If you see it as a killer, you will run away from it. Joseph did just that when Potiphar’s wife tempted him [**Gen. Chap. 39**]. *Adultery is a killer and once is more than enough!* Get out of it before it gets you out of life and salvation.