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Matthew 5:27-28 "Adultery"

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...as I mentioned earlier, we are in a time of unrest and uncertainty, and it's a time to draw near to the Lord. And those songs give us hope. Those songs remind us what it's all about. Someday, this will all be over, and we'll be in heaven forever.

I'd like for you to stand now as we have a word of prayer. "Loving Father in Heaven, as we are about to open Your word, we are praying for Your Holy Spirit to be the One that will teach us. We are asking for a supernatural experience through Your word. Lord, please, change our hearts, change our lives. Do a miraculous and powerful work. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen."

Please be seated, thank you. In 1976 in the summer, I was stationed in the coastguard at Duluth, Minnesota. I don't know if you've ever been there before, but Duluth, Minnesota and Superior, Wisconsin make up twin cities, right next to each other. They are North-Western Wisconsin and the Eastern part of Minnesota. It is a beautiful, beautiful harbor, and it is a large harbor there in Duluth. There are many, many ships from all over the world that come there. They come to get the grain from the Mid-West that is brought by rail to the harbor there. They come to get the iron-ore that is oared or mined out of the iron range of Northern Minnesota and in that area. They come from all over the world. And the Great Lakes are fresh water, as you know, and beautiful, beautiful, pristine, wonderful lakes. In fact, 20% of all of the world's fresh water is in the Great Lakes.

And so, as you can imagine, the United States government is really particular about what happens on the Great Lakes. It's such a beautiful resource, and an important resource to us. And the coastguard was responsible for oil spills to investigate them, to clean them up, and those types of things. There was a ship, a very large ship from Greece that had come into the harbor there, and around it was oil. And it was suspected that they had been pumping their bilges, which gets a – water gets in there and you are only allowed to pump it so much until you get to the oil that floats on the top, and then you've got to stop. Otherwise that oil will get out there on that beautiful, clear, fresh water. And so around this Greek ship, there is this black oil. And so the coastguard put their boom around it just to keep the oil secured. A boom floats on the top of the water, and because oil floats on the water, you can contain it until it can be cleaned up.

But it was our responsibility to board the ship and see if they were the ones that had put the oil out there in the first place because if they had, they were going to pay a huge price. Their country would pay our country for what they did. But the only way you can prove that it happened, is you have to take the oil from the spill, and then you have to board their vessel, and go down to the bilges and get oil from theirs, and see if the oil matches up chemically. If it does, then you have a match, and they are in great trouble. They did not want us to board them which made us think all the more that they were guilty. In fact, I had never boarded a foreign ship before; I'd seen it done when I was on a ship out in New Bedford, Massachusetts, but I had never been involved with boarding one of this huge ocean liners. I mean, they are huge.

There were three of us. There was the man in charge, and I was the engineman of the boat that we took, and then there was the person driving the boat. And he said, "I'm going to need your help guys." And about that time, I wished I was packing a 45, but, we had no weapons with us. All we had was the authority of the United States backing us up. We went on board their ship and it was quite clear they were not happy we were on their ship. It was almost like we were on sovereign soil, and it wasn't ours. And they did not want us there. And they knew why we were there. And this fellow told – he found one person that spoke English, and told them that we had to get oil

from their bilge. And there was quite an argument that took place. And this guy flashed his badge, you know, from the Federal Government saying, "We will do this or we will seize your ship." Well they weren't happy. And it ended up, I don't know how it happened to be me, but it ended up being me that had to go all the way down into the engine room, all the way down into the bilge and get the oil.

And I remember walking down there, passing the scalding, hateful faces. And just as I passed one guy, I heard a "click," and I looked over to my right. And he had about a seven inch blade on a switchblade. And he was staring at me on a menacing way. And I thought, "Oh man, 45 would be good right now." You know, the click of the breech of a 45 is a lot louder than the click of a switchblade knife. Well, anyways, he followed me down. Every step I took, he took a step, you know, it was kind of unnerving. But we got the oil sample, it was tested, and they indeed were the ones who had done it. And they had corrupted and debased the beautiful, beautiful water, and for that, they paid a huge price.

I want to study that with you today. Please turn in your Bibles to Matthew chapter 5, verses 27 and 28. In our series on the *Sermon on the Mount*, we've come to a brand new section where Jesus is speaking and He says: "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 the woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Today we are going to study about *adultery*. Next week, we will study what it means to have it in your heart. There is a lot in this. All I want you to understand today is the seriousness of adultery. How God looks at adultery, and we need some working definitions according to the scriptures.

"Adultery is voluntary sexual relations between a married man and someone other than his wife or between a married woman and someone other than her husband." The word *adultery* comes from the root word, *adulterate* which means "to corrupt, debase or make impure by the addition of a foreign or inferior substance, element or baser ingredient." Let me read that again: "*adulterate* is to corrupt, debase or make impure by the addition of a foreign or inferior substance, element or baser ingredient." Consequently, in the holy concept of marriage you have two people. And if one of those persons goes and they are with another individual sexually, they are corrupting, they are debasing, they are making the holiness of the marriage impure by the addition of a foreign and, note this, in the eyes of God, "inferior substance, element, or baser ingredient." And it is corrupting the holiness of marriage.

Now, when you study adultery in the Bible, you will recognize fairly soon that God uses it in a spiritual realm and in a physical realm. We are going to look first at the spiritual application. Let's turn to Ezekiel chapter 16. If you are not exactly sure where Ezekiel is, you'll find it just to the left of Daniel, if you can find Daniel. If not, it will be just to the right of Jeremiah, if you can find Jeremiah. If you can't find either of those, I encourage you to look at the index. It will have the page number. Ezekiel 16! Before I read this let me explain what is happening historically. This is written about five hundred and eighty years before Christ. Ezekiel is a prophet of God. He is an Israelite. In 605 or 602, right around there, depending of which scholar you believe and follow, the city of Jerusalem was taken captive. It was laid in siege by the Babylonians. And they won, and ultimately took a whole group of Israelites captive off to Babylon.

Now in that group apparently was a man named Ezekiel. Also, there was Daniel in that group. Left back in the city of Jerusalem was Jeremiah. Jeremiah is a prophet of God that preaches in the city of Jerusalem. Daniel is a prophet of God that preaches in the very court of the King. And Ezekiel is a prophet of God that lives out among the people who have been taken captive. And this is the message that God gave to Ezekiel. Ezekiel 16 verse 1: "Again, the word of the Lord came to me saying, 'Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations and say, 'Thus says

the Lord God to Jerusalem: “Your birth and your nativity, on the day you were born, *are* from the land of Canaan; your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite. As for your nativity, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water to cleanse *you*; you were not rubbed with salt nor wrapped in swaddling cloths.” He is talking to them as the nation, in a metaphor, for being one person. And He is saying, “When you were born, there was nobody there to take care of you. Nobody took care of you as a baby.”

And that is, if you want to liken it, that is to their experience in Egypt. Verse 5, “No eye pitied you, to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you; but you were thrown out into the open field, when you yourself were loathed on the day you were born. And when I passed by you and saw you struggling in your own blood, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ Yes, I said to you in your blood, ‘Live!’ I made you thrive like a plant in the field; and you grew, matured, and became very beautiful. Your breasts were formed, your hair grew, but you were naked and bare. When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed your time was the time of love; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine,” says the Lord God.” That would be likened to the experience at Sinai where the covenant was given and the people said, “All that you said Lord, we will do.”

Verse 9: “Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off you blood, and I anointed you with oil.” And this is likened to marriage here. “I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing *was of* fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate *pastry of* fine flour, honey, and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty. Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it *was* perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you,” says the Lord God.”

“But you trusted in your own beauty, played the harlot because of your fame, and poured out your harlotry on everyone passing by who *would have* it.” This beautiful scene of recovery, the beautiful scene of restoration, the beautiful scene of love and compassion and caring is clouded by the unfaithfulness of the bride, if you will, or of the wife; played the harlot. Later you can read in Ezekiel that it was so bad, God said, “Look, I want to tell you a parable,” and He uses two different names to describe Jerusalem, or the Southern Kingdom and the Northern Kingdom. And He said, “You know, most people spend money to be with a harlot. But you are so heart up for lovers, you pay people to love you. And here I am.” And so He is describing spiritually that the marriage that He wanted with them was disrupted by their unfaithfulness.

Look at verse 32, the very same chapter. He says to the people, “*You are* an adulterous wife, *who* takes strangers instead of her husband.” He is saying that to not serve Him, whom ever you are serving will be a corrupting, debasing and impure addition; it will be a foreign and inferior being, or substance or idea. It will be an element that is baser in its ingredients. On the spiritual realm, it is possible for one to commit adulteries spiritually. If we have any other gods but God, if we have any other ideas but God’s ideas; if we have any other ways but God’s ways, we are involved in spiritual adultery. Let’s shift gears, let’s go to physical adultery and see what God has to say about it.

Please turn to Exodus chapter 20 verse 14. This is what Jesus quotes in Matthew 5 and this is also the very first mention of the word, *adultery* in the Bible. Exodus chapter 20 verse 14, we will find it mentioned first as the seventh of the ten commandments. Exodus 20 verse 14 says, “You shall not commit adultery,” one of God’s Ten Commandments, “You shall not commit adultery.” He was serious about it. He was very serious about it because of

the effect that it has on the individuals involved, the effect that it has on the home, the effect that it has on the culture and the society that He was trying to raise that was to be serving Him. In fact, God is so serious about it, He lays down some very stringent punishments for those involved.

Look at Leviticus 20 verse 10. It says here, “The man who commits adultery with another man’s wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.” Now when we study these passages and you look at what people have written about them, you throw in some of the things from Proverbs where it says, you know, the husband will not be satisfied, you know, when he finds out that his wife has committed adultery, and he is going to really make sure that the man is punished, and so on and so forth. It’s given some people the impression that if a man had a wife that committed adultery, and it was a male dominated culture back then, let’s not stick our head in the sand – it’s what it was.

If the man had a wife that committed adultery, and it was found out in the community, some say well, it was up to the man to decide whether she would die. Not so. God said, she would die, and the man she was with would die. It was a capital crime, it was a state crime, it had nothing to do with the man’s decision, whether he forgave her or not. It was a very strict and harsh thing. Look at Deuteronomy 22 verse 22. Now these things almost seem shocking to us because in our day, it’s a “Oh, well”, you know, “It was an affair.” God considers it an abomination, a heinous crime, a deplorable crime. Deuteronomy 22 verse 22 it says, “If a man is found laying with a woman married to a husband, then both of them shall die...” both the man that lay with the woman, and the woman, “...so you shall put away the evil person from Israel.”

I did some studying about how they executed them back then, and I decided, I am just not going to share that. It wasn’t pretty, but they did execute them, and they were serious about it. Look at Hebrews chapter 13 because, you know, we are New Testament believers and we are grateful for grace. Amen! And we are thrilled with grace, but, nonetheless, though we are not brought before the church or the community to suffer punishment, God notes what took place. Hebrews 13 verse 4: “Marriage is honorable among all; and the bed undefiled. But fornicators and adulterers, God will judge.” Adultery, my dear brothers and sisters, is a heinous thing in the eyes of God. Perhaps it’s not in our eyes because we’ve gotten used to a culture that finds it, well, finds its theme in many movies, and books, and soap operas, and TV shows of all kinds. And so, it’s just, ‘oh well,’ you know. In God’s eyes it’s a very, very serious thing.

I want to show you a passage of scripture that is kind of obscure, and yet it helps us to see how serious this is in the eyes of God. Look at Numbers chapter 5. In Numbers chapter 5 I am going to read something that is probably going to disturb many of you, especially if you are women. But I want you to hang in there with me; we’ll come out okay at the end. But we’ve got to see it for what it is scripturally. God knew that the purity of the home is so important that even the suspicion that one of the individuals was not being faithful would crumple the relationship and could destroy the home. So He has the whole methodology that He has prescribed of how to deal when a husband suspected his wife of being unfaithful to him. Now, okay ladies, you may say, “Well how come it’s that way?” Well, let’s again, let’s remember, this is the culture, and God is dealing with a culture. This is nearly four thousand years ago that this is written. And our application of it today would be; yeah, it’s the same today, but men and women are going to face the same type of music.

And if you want, we are going to call this, *The Old Testament Lie Detector*. And we are going to see the principles and how they work. Verse 11, and oh, by the way, I should say this. In a male dominated culture where all the judges and all the courts were men, if a man dragged his wife before them and said, “I suspect her of adultery,” if God didn’t have certain procedures, what do you think would happen to the ladies? You know, it might be a good

way for a man just to find the woman who can cook better. Because, courts will get rid of her, boom, she is gone. Now I can... yeah, and so it could be corrupted. So, on one hand, this is going to seem rather harsh ladies, but on the other hand, it protected the ladies as you shall see. We are going to begin reading in verse 11. Numbers 5 verse 11: "And the Lord spoke to the Moses saying, 'Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, if any man's wife goes astray and behaves unfaithfully toward him, and a man lies with her carnally, and it is hidden from the eyes of her husband, and it is concealed that she has defiled herself, and there was no witness against her, nor was she caught, if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him, and he becomes jealous of his wife who has defiled herself; or if the spirit of jealousy comes upon him, and he becomes jealous of his wife although she has not defiled herself..." in another words, the issue here is the spirit of jealousy.

That he has questioned her, he is not satisfied with her answers; he is very suspicious that she has been unfaithful to him. God knows that that environment will ruin a home, so He has a methodology of how to deal with it. That's what we are talking about. Verse 15: "Then the man shall bring his wife to the priest." All right, so the man brings the wife to the priest. "Then he," the man, "shall bring the offering required for her. One-tenth of an ephah of barley meal; he shall pour no oil on it and put no frankincense on it, because it is a grain offering of jealousy, an offering for remembering, for bringing iniquity to remembrance." Now let's remember the steps here. He is suspicious of her; she is not giving satisfying answers to him. So he brings her to the priest. When he brings her to the priest, he brings the offering, all right?

Let's go on. "And the priest shall bring her near and set her before the Lord." So who is the ultimate judge in this situation? God! Verse 17: "The priest shall take holy water in an earthen vessel, and take some of the dust that is on the floor of the tabernacle and put it into the water." Now, many people when they read this think that that would soil the water and that's what would make the woman sick and so forth and so on. Well, in reality, the holy water was just regular water that was declared holy, probably in the laver where the priests would draw water out of to wash themselves before they went into the Holy Place. And the dust was not dirt, in the sense that is going to soil this water, and consequently that's what makes it bitter. No, even the dust of the Tabernacle was sacred and holy in the eyes of God. The emphasis is this is holy. This is holy! And they would mix this together. Let's see what happens.

Verse 18: "Then the priest shall stand the woman before the Lord, uncover the woman's head, and put the offering for remembering in her hands..." all right. So note this. The husband is not satisfied with her answers, takes her, takes an offering, they go to the priest. He takes holy water, dust from the Tabernacle, takes her, places her before the Lord, gives her the offering that her husband brought for her. He is going to uncover her head, which is the symbol of humility and also of repentance. All this is done in a very sacred, formal way. He is going to speak to her. He is going to say in verse 19: "And the priest shall put her under oath, and say to the woman, 'If no man has lain with you, and if you have not gone astray to uncleanness while under your husband's authority, be free from this bitter water that brings a curse."

In other words, if you are innocent, then let this bitter water do nothing to you. "But if you have gone astray while under your husband's authority, and if you have defiled yourself with some man other than your husband who has lain with you, then the priest shall put the woman under the oath of the curse, and he shall say to the woman, 'The Lord make you a curse and an oath among your people when the Lords makes your thigh rot and your belly swell..." Now, that water would not do that chemically. So we are talking about an act of God causing that to happen. Or we are talking about an emotional experience that causes a physical reaction. I don't know how it

worked? I wasn't there and God hasn't told me how it worked. But these people thought that this is real. You know, this is a litmus test that really, really works.

When it talks about the thigh rotting and the belly swelling, it is describing problems in the reproductive area of the woman. In other words, in the Hebrew it's very graphic. Too graphic for me to repeat from the pulpit! But it means this: that she has allowed another man to put seed into her. And that has corrupted her reproductive area because she has been unfaithful in marriage. So God is saying, if that indeed happened in this process, you will not be allowed to bear children again. You will not be allowed to bear children. So it's affecting the reproduction ability of the woman. Which, back then, it was considered a curse if you couldn't have children. So you see how it all ties in? Verse 22: "...and may this water that causes the curse go into your stomach, and make your belly swell and your thigh rot." Then the woman shall say, "Amen, so be it."

So she agrees to this. In other words, she is claiming her innocence. She is saying, "That's right, I am willing to do this. I am not guilty. But if I am, then let the curse come upon me." Okay, do you see that? Well let's read on: "Then the priest shall write these curses in a book, and he shall scrape them off into the bitter water." I don't know how he did that? I don't know how they wrote? I don't know if it's just entirely symbolic or somehow he could write in such a way that the actual letters could go down into that as well? But in essence, she was drinking the curse. All right? And we go on. "And he shall make the woman..." verse 24, "...drink the bitter water that brings a curse, and the water that brings the curse shall enter her to become bitter. Then the priest shall take the grain offering of jealousy from the woman's hand, shall wave the offering before the Lord, and bring it to the altar; and the priest shall take a handful of the offering, as its memorial portion, burn it on the altar, and afterward make the woman drink the water."

So the offering has been offered, now she drinks the water. "When he has made her drink the water, then it shall be, if she has defiled herself and behaved unfaithfully toward her husband, that the water that brings a curse will enter her and become bitter, and her belly will swell, her thigh will rot, and the woman will become a curse among her people. But if the woman has not defiled herself, and is clean, then she shall be free and may conceive children." So there we are. Well, what's the lesson for us? Well, the lesson for us is obviously, when there is a home, and it is suspected that one of the married individuals has been unfaithful; God recognizes how disruptive that could be. It's a time for honesty when confronted. God will judge. And God will bring things about where truth will be known and will be understood.

But before, ladies, we get really upset what is going on here; let me explain this in the context of the New Testament and of grace. Many of you are familiar with the story of Mary. She is the sister of Martha and of Lazarus. And Mary, somehow, we don't know how, she ended up in a town of Magdala where she made a living as a prostitute. And that's how she became known, Mary of Magdala. And she, many people believe, and I can't prove it scripturally, but it sure makes the story neat, she is the woman in John chapter eight that is thrown at feet of Jesus. This is what many people believe. "We've caught a woman, right-handed in the act of the adultery. Now the Law says she should be stoned. What do you say?" Jesus writes in the dirt, stands up, and He looks at the men there and says: "Now those of you who are without sin, you cast the first stone." And they leave, and He says to her, "Woman, where are your accusers?" They are gone. And He says, "Neither do I accuse you. Now, go and sin no more."

That's how God deals with adultery, okay? Confronts it, but He says, "Don't do it anymore." And the story of the woman here is one of grace as well -- because, let's continue it further. Who provided the offering for the woman? The husband! The husband provided the offering to make things right with God. And the judgment was

determined by God Himself through the conscience. And the story of Mary goes on further because Jesus, just a little while before He died, Mary recognized, He was going to die. And she took an offering, her alabaster box filled with spikenard, a very expensive perfume. She came to Jesus; she anointed His feet with that. She wept. And when she did that, do you remember what she did? She took her hair down; she uncovered herself and wiped His feet with her hair. She is kind of living the parable, if you will. And the men that were there, they rose up against her. And Bible even says it clearly, Judas was upset. He said, "That is a waste of money that should have been sold and given to the poor." And it says, he didn't want to give it to the poor, but he was the treasurer himself, you know. He wanted to keep it.

Do you remember what Jesus said? Some of my favorite words in all of the New Testament. He said, "Let her alone! Let her alone. She has done a good thing." Now that helps us to see. Because, brothers and sisters, the truth is, God, our Father, our Husband, has provided an offering for us. And what He is asking is that we would come honestly before Him and confess our sin. And He will say to our screaming conscience, to the demons and to the community, "Let them alone; let them alone." Now, there are only two types of people that are gathered here today. This applies in the spiritual realm; it also applies in the physical realm. There are only two types of people here. One, those who have committed adultery, and the other type, those who will if they don't stay close to God, that's it. There are only two types of people.

And let's apply it spiritually. Two types of people: there are those sitting here today that are committing spiritual adultery with God. You have other gods, you have other ways, you are not fully committed, you are not being faithful to the Lord. And then, there are those who will end up that way unless they stay close to God. And in the physical realm, it is obvious. Brothers and sisters, the key to victory in the physical realm is to be right with God in the spiritual realm. To have no other gods but Him, to be faithful only unto Him, so long as you both shall live. Let's not allow an adulterated experience spiritually where we bring in a baser or lesser, and break up the purity of a holy relationship with God. And if anyone here has been involved physically with another person, maybe you are right now, I'm telling you by the grace of God, cut it off. Get away from it. The Bible says that is bringing fire to yourself and you will be burned. Get away from it. And if you are tempted to go there, fight that temptation! Do not yield.

We will study about that next week. This week, I am hoping to share with you the seriousness about adultery. It is serious in the eyes of God. So serious, it can cost you your eternal life. But today, all of us have an opportunity to make it right; in the spiritual realm, in the physical realm, where ever it is. And if you would like to say today, "I want Jesus as my savior, I want to be faithful to God," I am going to ask you to stand. "Father in Heaven, we pray Heavenly Father, we want to thank you that though sin has come into our life, either in the spiritual realm of the physical, You in Your grace will help us to rise again. That nothing can keep us down if we come back to You. You will rise us up, You will lift us! You will heal us, and You will call us Yours again. Please Lord, we pray for that experience in Jesus name, Amen."