

LET CHRIST BE THE LAST MAN STANDING

Matthew 5:27-30

TEXT: *You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.*

In Jesus' name, my fellow redeemed:

I learned to love cheese when I was a Freshman in college. Before the event that introduced me to the taste of cheese, I disliked its flavor and texture. What made this dramatic change take place? Hunger, pure and simple.

It happened one night when after a few hours of study, several college friends and I went to an old beer establishment that was frequently visited by the young men of Northwestern College, our Synod's pre-seminary institution. In those days there were no refrigerators allowed in our dorm rooms, so young college men regularly suffered a state of hunger unlike the which I had never experienced while living at home in Michigan. That local bar was owned by an old German lady named Katy. She appreciated our business and often had things like pickled eggs and hot roast beef sandwiches available to us at a very low price. One night, Katy was offered slices of Limburger cheese. The smell of the cheese was overwhelming, but the pangs of hunger moved me to give it a try despite the smell. The taste was overwhelming, but as I continued to consume this cheese known for its powerful smell and flavor, I found myself enjoying it! My experience with Limburger opened the door to the enjoyment I then found in eating all makes and flavors of cheese with an enjoyment that exists to this day!

How did this happen? It was hunger. Hunger can cause a person to do things that he might never think of doing. Without that powerful hunger I would never have eaten any kind of cheese because I had determined that I hated cheese. But there is another kind of hunger that exists in us that is so powerful that it will often lead us to do things that we would never have considered doing. That is the evil appetite of man's sinful nature, our Old Adam. It exists in all souls ever conceived and it has such a lustful, covetous, hateful and evil appetite it also has led countless souls, even Christians, to do things that we never thought we would do. When it comes to the Old Adam, let the Christian beware! Never say, "Never!" about any sin.

Jesus warns about the dangerous power of the Old Adam. He warns us so that we might cling to Him, the only cure for sin. LET CHRIST BE THE LAST MAN STANDING throughout our life, up until the end of our life!

There is false teaching that has deceived many. It is the idea that faith and salvation are won by growing in our faith and in righteous living. This sounds good, except that Scripture tells us that God Himself said concerning the human heart: *...every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.* Ge 6 Our Old Adam fights to stand tall to the end. This is a fact that must be recognized and understood so that the true man of faith will always seek to repent of sin and to rely entirely on the Gospel.

Why else would Jesus advise us: *If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.* Is Jesus speaking in hyperbole? Is He exaggerating only to make a point? He is not exaggerating. If it were possible so serious is the power and evil appetite of our sinful nature it would be better to be chopped to pieces than for our whole body to be damned to hell.

The 1992 movie drama call "Scent of a Woman" starring Al Pacino as a blind and medically retired Army officer whose lust for women was not at all hindered by being blind. Hence, the title of the movie: "Scent of a Woman." Blindness didn't stop the hunger of lust. So do not overlook what our Lord is saying when He uses this extreme instruction for sin! ***You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*** Our Old Adam intends to stand tall to the end. There is nothing, no sin that any of us is incapable of committing if and when the time offers us the opportunity! Do not make the mistake of letting your Old Adam stand there and self-righteously point to the drug addict, the homosexual, the adulterer, the child-molester, or any of the horrific behaviors that surround us and say: "I will never to anything like that!" Never say "never."

While the Old Adam fights to stand tall to the end, our Lord has created in us the "New Man" that does not stand but kneels in humble repentance, and by God's grace alone remains standing in the end because it is Christ who is our "Last Man Standing."

The Apostle Paul was aware of this truth, and because he was a Christian he lamented this fact as will all who are Christians: ***I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do-this I keep on doing. ... When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. ... What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?*** Ro 7 Will it be gouging out the eyes? Will be chopping of my arms and legs? No, the sinful nature will be with me as long as I live on this earth! What wretched people we are! But then Paul blurts out: ***Thanks be to God-through Jesus Christ our Lord!*** Ro 7 Where does this come from? What is this voice that suddenly erupts with thanks and praise to the same Jesus who first commands us to gouge out our eyes and chop off our hands so that we do not sin and go to hell? Scripture calls this the voice of the New Man that God has created in all who are called to faith by grace. Where did he come from? Jesus said told a Jewish teacher, Nicodemus: ***I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.*** In disbelief that teacher asked: ***How can a man be born when he is old? ... Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born! Jesus answered, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.*** Jn 3 It's miracle number two. The first man, born of the flesh of our mothers is the Old Adam. The second man, born again of the water of Baptism the Holy Spirit is the New Man, the man of faith that stands next to Jesus, and as our hearts declare: ***What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?*** Ro 7 He points to Jesus who paid for our sins with His own suffering and death and then rose again for our justification and declares: ***Thanks be to God-through Jesus Christ our Lord!*** Ro 7 Job wrote: ***I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes-I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!*** Job 19 This is what Jesus is talking about. Without Jesus, our Redeemer who lives and will be standing at the end of the world on Judgment Day, there is worse than no hope. There is only eternal damnation. But when that Day comes you and I who are born again by Baptism and the Spirit will recognize Him then as we do even today, singing: ***Thanks be to God-through Jesus Christ our Lord!*** Ro 7 Amen