

a matter of guilt so much as a matter of degree of offense. All sin is wrong of course, and we are as accountable for our thoughts as for our deeds. But in our deeds we involve and defile others and so compound the error. We are accountable for our thoughts and in this world of wicked and lustful ways it becomes very easy to be false at heart. "No," says the Lord, "don't be that way!"

It is necessary that the people who know God learn to have a mastery over the life forces. That is why Jesus gives the figurative word (Matthew 5:29-30) about the members of the body. The Lord is not suggesting any form of mutilation. But He is saying that one would be better off without being under the mastery of some organ of the body. The best thing is to learn to control the life force. This is possible only as one allows the Word of God to be one's guide and allows the will of God to be the dominant factor in life. By mastery, in this special sense, we do not mean an absolute state of physical perfection. We do mean, however, a spirit of overcoming in which we do not simply indulge ourselves in evil and imagine that no harm can come to us. The attitude that makes this realistic is the one that says: "What the Lord says is right, I will make it my intention." This is not a slavish practice...it is a living relationship with God, possible through faith in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps we should note that when we fail to live this way we may become involved in one of the more wicked expressions of sin: spiritual adultery. This is often charged against Israel and it is the practical theme of the book of Hosea. When Israel forgot her God and followed pagan deities she was guilty of spiritual adultery and God charged her with this. Be careful that your spiritual affection is not with another God. Be sure that your life affection is with the persons to whom it is assigned.