

## “Heart Hindrances to Christ-Exalting Marriage”

*Series: Marriage – What’s the Point? – Part 3*

**Introduction:** Take your Bibles and turn to Genesis 2, Genesis chapter 2.

A look around at marriage in our world can be a very disheartening task. The attack on Biblical marriage increases as the cultural mindset shifts to a “do whatever you want to do” mentality. Instead of marriage being about cultural duty and fulfilling your given role within society, Western culture has now made marriage about the individual, this shift has resulted in people defining what they would like marriage to look like and calling it marriage. So, if marriage is about you anyways, you might as well have the marriage that most appeals to you and supposedly satisfies you. So, if that means as a man you marry another man – our western culture says - then so be it because marriage is about you. Or, if that means that as a woman you want to marry another woman, then so be it, because marriage is all about the individual. If you desire to have multiple spouses because you think this is the best way to your desired end, then go ahead because marriage is all about you. You see, in our culture we have not re-defined marriage because God’s Word cannot be changed on the matter – the definition of marriage is settled as one man covenanted to one woman for one life. But our culture has re-defined and expanded upon what they want and like and what they think satisfies and then have called this marriage.

On top of this you have the blatant disregard for marriage that is happening in which people think that if they can’t find their soul-mate then they can’t commit to one single relationship. Or having found someone who can fulfill many of their personal desires in marriage they simply live with them and enjoy the benefits of marriage without the commitment of marriage. Besides this you have the rampant divorce rate in our culture where it seems that if you simply have proof of irreconcilable difference with your spouse – for a small fee you can be freed from the covenant commitment through a certificate of divorce.

And so, as people in Christ’s church living in a culture that increasingly rejects God’s plan for marriage, we could easily look at all of these things and think that the greatest threat to Christ-exalting marriage is the Gay agenda, or the cohabitation that dots the landscape, or the high divorce rate, or politicians who won’t pass laws that enforce God’s design. It would be easy to look out there and think that the greatest enemy of Christ-exalting marriage is something few of us know or struggle with. And most certainly – all of these things are detrimental to God’s institution of marriage in Western society, and with this decay of the building block of society there will be a most certain decay of the society itself – which we see being played out in front of us every day. But are any one of these things really the greatest threat to Christ-exalting marriage? How about your marriage in particular? Does the Gay Marriage movement, or the

rampant infidelity of our society, or the divorce rate, or the cohabitation of many – do these things pose the greatest threat to your marriage being the Christ-exalting entity that God designed it to be?

Certainly they all have effect as the torrential rain of attacks on marriage beat against the siding of the house of your marriage – the paint begins to suffer and needs attention and bolstering and re-painting. And as you gaze upon the disregard of marriage in our society you will certainly be tempted to disregard your own. But do these things constitute the greatest hindrance to your marriage exalting Christ?

To bring it closer to home, we would all look into the context of our own marriages and see other problems that pose greater threats. So we see the depleting funds in the checking account and the looming bills on the desk and we are bound to believe that if we just had more money our marriage would be happier and more successful. Or we simmer in the frustration of poor communication patterns and we presume to think proper communication must be the key to a better marriage. Or failed and frustrated attempts at intimacy lead us to believe that a better sex life is the key to our marriage being a success. Or conflict over rebellious children causes us to dream about how healthy our marriage could be if it weren't for the sinful choices of our offspring. The lack of respect from our wife, or the lack of love from our husband lead us to believe that the true key to a successful relationship is most certainly found in my spouse treating me like I deserve to be treated.

Throughout the time of my almost 14 years of marriage to Julie, I have at one time or another believed every one of those things. I have thought at different times in my marriage to Julie that if we had more money, or if romance was rekindled, or if she would just respond to me the way that I thought she should, or if we could communicate better, or if she would treat me like I deserve to be treated then we would have a more successful marriage. What I have come to learn, and am continuing to learn by God's grace, is that there is a much deeper problem that attacks the heart of my marriage and therefore takes away my ability to glorify God in my home. It is this greatest threat that I want to explain to you this morning and call you to wage grace-enabled war against it.

We looked a few weeks ago at the glorious truth presented in Genesis 2 where God speaks clearly of his design and his doing in creating the marriage relationship between Adam and Eve. He then made known his decree that this was how marriage was to be for all of time when he said in Genesis 2:24 – Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. We know this is God's universal decree for marriage because it is what Jesus goes back to in Matthew 19 as the starting ground for his explanation against the flippant use of divorce in his day. Genesis 2:24 is also reiterated in the most crucial of texts about marriage in the Bible in Ephesians 5 to make it known that this decree of one man to one woman for one life is given as a means to point to the eternal and glorious reality of Christ's

union with the Church. Marriage is a temporal covenant that lasts just for this lifetime, but its significance goes infinitely beyond this life as it points to Jesus and His loving covenant with His Bride – the Church. And it is this eternally significant but temporal covenant that we covered last week. But now we ask, what is it that threatens this Christ-exalting marriage covenant?

Well, in Genesis 2:25 we find that the doing of God to bring one man together with one woman in the covenant bond of marriage produced a completely trusting and unashamed bond. So verse 25 follows verse 24 in the text and it says – “And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” The covenant bond made by God and decreed for all time had produced a relationship that was without shame and without problem. There was nothing between them – they were naked and they were not ashamed. The problems with marriage cannot be found in the design or the decree or the doing of God. The problems with marriage begin in Genesis chapter 3 where Eve is deceived by the Serpent and falls into rebellious sin against the Creator God. Adam quickly follows suit and takes of the forbidden fruit and eats. And what is the result? Well, this sin against the Creator God of the universe guarantees the whole human race to be under sin and deserving of sin’s eternal consequence – separation from God through death. And this universal consequence also carries very real and tangible results in the context of everyday life. So Adam and Eve – the ones who were naked and unashamed in 2:25 are found after their sin in verse 7 with both of their eyes begin opened so as to know their nakedness and so they sowed fig leaves together to cover themselves. They were no longer problem free. Sin brought problem and conflict into their marriage. And this problem and conflict has been the experience of all who have ever been married, or who have even stopped to closely observe someone else’s marriage. I don’t say that to be discouraging to you about the reality of marriage. Marriage can be the most wonderful relationship in life, but in all honesty – it can also be one of the most miserable relationships in all of life.

You see, we start out in marriage with wonderful experiences of emotional joy and thrill as we each put on our best faces to impress the other. But within months after the wedding three realities start to sink in. First you realize that the delightful person you married is actually pretty selfish. Second you begin to discover that this wonderful person is beginning to think the same thing about you. And third you weigh your selfishness against theirs and conclude that their selfishness is much worse than your own and is therefore the main problem in the marriage.<sup>1</sup> And so we find ways to exist in a marriage that is less than we desired and that proves to be not as Christ-exalting, or worse yet we look for a way out of the marriage. Now, for those of you who are not yet married, I do not mean by these statements to scare you away from ever being married – because that has its own set of problems. As you will see throughout the rest of the sermon, the problem is not marriage, but rather the sinful hearts of those joined in marriage. Therefore, don’t avoid marriage, but seek to address the problem of the sinful heart that creates these problems within marriage.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Meaning of Marriage*, Timothy Keller, 2011; pg. 63.

And this is my main point this morning. For those of you who are married, your sinful heart is the greatest hindrance to your marriage being as Christ-exalting as it can be. For those of you who are yet to be married please understand that before you say “I do” the greatest hindrance to your marriage becoming as Christ exalting as it was intended to be is your very own sinful heart. This is a crucial point to make because we don’t naturally think this way. So turn with me to Matthew chapter 7, Matthew 7.

**I. Awareness of other’s sin is my natural posture – Mt. 7:3-5**

- a. In Matthew 7, we see a key thought that will help us to understand why we have such difficulty grasping the most serious problem in our marriage. *Read vs. 3-5.*
- b. What a brilliant analogy that makes obvious to us our own tendency. We have a natural awareness of other’s sin to the extent that we become blatantly hypocritical about our own sin. So, the easiest thing for us to do in our sin-stained condition is to look past our most obvious and heinous sin and focus in on the sin of others. And so, like a guy with a big log sticking out of his eye trying to get close enough to his spouse so as to remove the piece of dust that is making her eye water, this is how we act when it comes to our own sin.
- c. Do you know that uncomfortable experience at the eye doctor where they have to get way to close for comfort and shine that 9 million lumens light into your eye to look and make sure that your brain still exists back there somewhere? Well, can you imagine the eye doctor coming into the room with a big log sticking straight out of his eye? That very uncomfortable situation of being too close to someone you hardly know, just got impossible and silly because the doctor has a big log in his eye. He can’t possibly examine you!
- d. And yet, this is exactly what we do in our marriages all the time. When conflict rises and things don’t go as we think they should, our first awareness is of our spouse’s sin. This is our natural posture. To look past our log and see our spouse’s speck.
- e. Maybe you have heard of the backwoods family that one day made their way to the big city. “Walking the streets, mesmerized by the great skyscrapers, the family follows a crowd through some strange, slowly spinning glass doors. As they emerge into a huge indoor area, the mother and a daughter stop to marvel at a gliding silver staircase. The father and son move further into the building, and in a few moments they’re standing in front of a large wall filled with several pairs of shiny metal doors, with lighted buttons next to each one. As they gaze at some blinking numbers above the doors, a bedraggled old woman with a red shopping bag approaches the set of doors nearest them. As if by magic the doors slide apart, revealing a small, empty, wood-paneled room. The woman steps in and the doors slide closed behind her. The man and his son stand transfixed: What’s happening in there? Why would she want to go into such a tiny room? After a minute or so the doors magically open again. Out steps a beautiful, energetic woman who

brushes past them, red shopping bag in hand. Without taking his eyes off the elevator, the father leans down and whispers to his boy, ‘Son, go get your mother.’”

- f. And isn't this just how we want it to work? Don't we think that we can fix our marriage issues by fixing our spouse? Just get them into the magical wood-paneled room and maybe they will come out being all that we hoped they would be all along and then everything will be solved. This is how we work. Our natural posture in the relationships of life- and especially in the closest of all relationships, marriage – we have great awareness of other's sin, while boldly looking right past our own. To be clear, in Matthew 7 Jesus is not addressing the question of who is more at fault in the situation. It is not about which speck or log is bigger or more problematic. His focus in these verses is our focus. We view other people's sin as the log and ours as the speck, but Jesus turns it upside down. Our sin is the log and other people's sin is the speck. Ours is the greater problem and must be addressed first. And this is especially true in marriage, for in marriage the greatest problem is our own sinful heart, not our spouse's.
2. **Focus on the fruit instead of on the root is my natural tendency – Mt. 15:10-20**
    - a. A thought that is tandem to this one is that we have a natural tendency to focus on the fruit instead of on the root. So in Matthew 15 Jesus is teaching again about true righteousness and he tells them that it is not the food that goes into a person that defiles them, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles them. This teaching confused the disciples and so Peter asked him to explain what he meant. And so he says this in verse 17. *Read 17-20.*
    - b. This truth runs counter to the human paradigm. We are trained by our sinful heart to focus on fruit not on the root. So, think of the Garden of Eden in Genesis 3. What did Adam and Eve do in response to their sin? They sewed fig leaves together to deal with the external problem that sin had created. Part of the heinous reality of our sinfulness is that we instantly lose sight of the main problem and therefore of the main solution. We focus on the fruit instead of on the root.
    - c. So, sin tells us that if we continue to have conflict in our marriage whenever we try to talk together, then the answer must be in our communication. We need to fix the fruit – that is the answer. Or sin tells us that if we are having a problem in our marriage regarding intimacy then we need to spice up the romance a little and get more creative – in other words we need to fix the fruit.
    - d. But Jesus counters this natural paradigm by telling us that the words of the mouth are simply the evidence that something is wrong with the root – the heart. Our problems in marriage cannot be fixed by taping new fruit to a bad tree. We need to fix the tree by the grace of God so that it begins to produce good fruit. To state it another, more clear, way – you must understand that the biggest problem in your marriage is not communication, or intimacy, or romance, or

understanding one another, or lack of love, or lack of respect. No, all of these things are fruit that give evidence of a bad root. For out the abundance of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander – these are what defile a person. The biggest threat to your marriage is your sinful heart, or as it is often referred to in the New Testament – your flesh.

3. The root problem in *my* marriage is *my* sin – Galatians 5:13-17; Rom. 7:14-24

- a. Turn with me to Galatians 5, Galatians chapter 5. I long to make this point clear to you from the text of Scripture – the root problem of my marriage is my flesh. The root problem in your marriage is your flesh.
- b. In Galatians 5 Paul has been addressing a church that has needed a lot of correction to their theology – especially about the Gospel. This misunderstanding of the Gospel that had been brought in by false teachers in Galatia had effect on the life of the church – to the point where it is clear in chapter 5 that much conflict is happening among the body. And in addressing these problems Paul points them to the greatest problem in their midst – their own flesh! Let's start reading in verse 13. *Read 13-17.*
- c. This text assumes that they want to do what is right – which is summarized by the Great Commandment – love your neighbor as yourself. They obviously are not loving one another as they ought to because Paul warns them of devouring one another as a result of using the freedom they have in Christ as an opportunity for the flesh. If they use freedom as a means to appease the flesh they are only fanning into flame the problems that exist within the church. And so he hones in on what the heart of the problem is in verses 16-17. The flesh is vehemently opposed to the Spirit and the Spirit is opposed to the flesh. You must walk by one or the other. You will either live each moment in the power and under the direction of the flesh – your sinful heart – or you will live by the power and under the direction of the Spirit. The flesh hates the Spirit and it is opposed to the Spirit and it wages war against the Spirit. The Apostle Paul describes this intense battle in very personal terms in Romans 7 where he says:
  - i. <sup>14</sup> For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. <sup>15</sup> For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. <sup>16</sup> Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. <sup>17</sup> So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. <sup>19</sup> For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. <sup>21</sup> So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. <sup>22</sup> For I delight in

the law of God, in my inner being, <sup>23</sup> but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. <sup>24</sup> Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (Rom 7:14-24 ESV)

- d. I want this to be crystal clear to you. The sides in this war that we face in every part of life, but especially in the closest of all human relationships – marriage – the sides in this war are not husband and wife, or male and female, or leader and follower, or controller and controlled – the sides in this war are Spirit and flesh. It is a clash of desires. The desires of the Spirit are directly opposed to the desires of the flesh. The fruit of the desires of the flesh are listed for us starting in verse 19. They are sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. Where these types of things exist in your marriage, they are products of the flesh. Where you are divided – it is a product of your sinful heart. Where you have impurity – it is a product of the desires of your flesh. Where you have idolatry, enmity, and strife – where fits of anger break in – where you are competing with your spouse as a rival – where there is dissension and envy – these are all products of the desires of your flesh. The desire of the flesh is to simply keep you from doing the things you want to do in following Christ. Hence, the flesh poses the greatest threat to your marriage being as Christ-exalting as it is intended to be. For it does not exalt Christ to have a marriage where these fruits of the flesh are present!
- e. One day, I had a very stressful day at work. Julie knew that my day was going to be busy and she knew that I had several meetings scheduled that were less than easy. As I made the very short journey from office to back door I remember hoping that my wife would be especially sympathetic to me. I was burdened, tired, stressed, and desiring some TLC. But as I entered the back door I was shocked to find that my usually angelic children had put mom through the ringer that day. She was frazzled, frustrated, and fried. She was scurrying around the kitchen trying to get dinner ready as she also tried to answer the requests of some needy children. My entrance into the room was hardly noticed, and the war was about to begin. You see, at that very moment, the Spirit desired for me to set my desires, even my needs, aside. The Spirit desired for me to be crucified to self and to be a servant to my wife. The Spirit desired for me to love Julie like Christ loved the Church. The Spirit desired for me to be patient, kind, gentle, longsuffering, and self-controlled.
- f. But the flesh – oh man – the flesh wanted the polar opposite. The flesh wanted me to do anything in that moment, but the right thing. Retreat to the bedroom and pout, or start yelling at the kids, or make a snide comment about my less than perfect life, or retreat to the internet and get an update on anything *outside* of my

home – any of those options, and a whole host of other ones, was what the flesh desired in the moment.

- g. And as a follower of Jesus Christ – one who has been redeemed from my sin by the power of His shed blood – I have both options on the table because my sin is still present, but it is no longer in absolute control. I can walk according to the desires of the Spirit, or according to the desires of the flesh. Unfortunately, on this particular day, I chose to walk according to the flesh. My unmet needs and desires fed my flesh's narrative that I deserve better around here. And so, I started to “help” Julie with the household chores that she obviously couldn't get to without my awesome and superior skills. I made it obvious through snide comments and slamming drawers and doors that I was helping her because she was so terrible of a wife and needed my help. Needless to say, the fruit of the desires of my flesh did terrible damage that day that caused much division and strife and fits of anger.
- h. But it was not my circumstance that made me sin. My sin was not the result of a spouse who did not give me what I needed or desired. My sin was the result of walking by the flesh and not by the Spirit.
- i. If you have been born anew by the glorious work of God by grace through faith in Jesus Christ's finished work, then walking by the Spirit is possible. If you have not been born again unto new life, then you are still under the absolute power of sin. You have no freedom from it. You are in bondage, dead to God. But if you are in Christ, you are dead to sin and alive to God. And so, as Galatians 5 goes on to make clear, while your own flesh is the greatest problem in your marriage, your ability to walk by the Spirit through your identification with Christ is the sufficient answer to your greatest problem. I say this to make clear to you that your greatest problem does not have to determine the course of your marriage. In Christ, you have been crucified to the flesh, as it says in verse 24, and its passions and desires are dead to you. This does not mean they are no longer there, but it means they are no longer in power. They have been removed from the throne and no longer rule. You have been crucified with Christ and you have been raised with Him to newness of life. Therefore you can walk by the Spirit, and bear the fruit of gentleness, kindness, love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control.
- j. But my point to you this morning is that you can also walk according to the desires of the flesh which is at war with the Spirit, and when you do, your flesh is the greatest problem in your marriage. And so I say to you – be aware that there is a battle raging. Be on guard to the fact that sin is crouching at the door, looking for every opportunity to attack you with its Spirit-defying desires.
- k. “July 21, 1861. The first major battle of the Civil War started before dawn. The roar of artillery seemed to awaken everyone in Virginia as the Union and Confederate armies clashed among the farms by a stream called Bull Run. But a

strange thing happened as the battle intensified. Hundreds of Washingtonians – Senators, Representatives, government workers and their families, all dressed in leisure apparel and carrying picnic baskets – raced to the hill near Manassas to watch the battle unfold. Armed with opera glasses to survey the fighting, they chatted amicably as men were slaughtered on the fields below. One northern sympathizer commented, ‘That is splendid. Oh my! Is not that first rate? I guess we will be in Richmond this time tomorrow.’ Spirits were high, toasts were raised. All in all, they thought it a superb way to spend a summer afternoon. Suddenly a Rebel counterattack led by a hard-charging cavalry swept over the Union flank, putting the army to flight. Even to untrained eyes the implications were obvious; the serene picnic ground was about to become a battle zone. Mass confusion erupted as the spectators fled, just moments before the Confederate wave washed over the hill. The entertainment was over. The battle was upon them. The picnickers discovered something about war that day. You can’t be close to it and safe from it at the same time. Only the naïve think they can stand on the sidelines of warfare and merely be entertained. When war enters the scene, everything it touches becomes a battlefield.”<sup>2</sup>

1. You cannot merely be a spectator to the war that wages in your heart. The flesh is waging war against the Spirit. It is seeking to destroy you, and your marriage. You must be engaged in the battle! You must seek to walk according to the Spirit!
4. **Awareness of my own sinfulness is the key to magnifying God in my life – 1 Tim. 1:13-17**
  - a. Now, you may be saying as we come to the end of this message that all of this focus on sin is a depressing thing. In fact, you may be tempted to believe that your heart really doesn’t need this focus on your own sinfulness. You need to be built up, not torn down – you may be thinking. So, as we close, I would ask you to turn to 1 Timothy 1, 1 Timothy chapter 1. I must make this very simple point to you as we close. An awareness of my own sinfulness is the key to magnifying God in my life, and in my marriage. 1 Timothy is written towards the end of Paul’s life and ministry. If ever he had reached a point where he could stop thinking about his sinful heart, this would be the time. But we find him in the first part of a very personal letter to his son in the faith, Timothy, being very frank about his own sinful heart. This is nothing new for Paul. We read similar words in Revelation 7 where he says “O wretched man that I am.” Also in 1 Corinthians 15 he makes it clear that he is the least of all of the Apostles and it is merely by the grace of God that he is what he is. And now here in one of his final letters he says this starting in verse 12. *Read 12-17*
  - b. This saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. Is this hyperbole

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<sup>2</sup> Dave Harvey, *When Sinners Say “I Do”*; 2007, pg. 45-46

- overstatement by Paul for the sake of effect? Hardly! This is Paul’s honest view of himself. Paul was a student of his own heart and he knew his heart the best – better than anyone else’s, and this knowledge drove him to the conclusion that he was the worst sinner he knew. This can seem to be a morbid outlook on ourselves, and in our self-esteem crazed day we are especially inoculated against this kind of honest assessment of our hearts. But this honest assessment is exactly what is needed to put us on the right road to a Christ-exalting marriage!
- c. We must be students of our hearts like Paul was, and in studying our hearts and seeing the war and the struggle and the complete wickedness of sin, we must conclude that we are the worst sinner we know. Because if we truly understand our sin as heinous as it is in view of the God that it is against, we cannot but conclude that we are the worst of sinners. As Dave Harvey says in his book *When Sinners Say “I Do”* - “A sober assessment of our sinful condition doesn’t hinder that work, it celebrates it.”<sup>3</sup> We are not hindering the work of sanctification by soberly assessing our hearts, but rather we are aiding and celebrating it.
  - d. Is this not the result for Paul? After considering and studying his heart, his conclusion is a statement of praise to the merciful God who had saved him. His awareness of his sinful heart drove him to consider the glories of the Gospel, of the Savior who took his sin on the cross, of the mercy of the Father to place his punishment on his Son instead of on him, and of the God who alone deserves honor and glory because of this work. You see, an awareness of my own sinfulness enhances my awareness of the work of God’s grace in me, and puts me on the path of longing for that work more and more. But a lack of awareness of my own sinfulness puts me on the path of inspecting other people’s sinfulness and seeking to change them so that things can be as they should. The difference here is the difference between a marriage relationship filled with God’s grace and one filled with man’s effort. And at the heart of the difference is how you view yourself in relationship to God and to your spouse. And if you study your heart and understand that the greatest problem in your marriage is your own sinfulness, then your sin will begin to become more and more bitter to you. And becoming bitter it will pave the way for your marriage to become sweeter. For if you do not understand the bitterness of sin, you will not experience the sweetness of Christ-exalting marriage. For Christ exalting marriage has as its foundation a husband and a wife who are most aware of their own sinful heart and how it wages war against the Spirit to draw them into sin. Aware of their own sin they then relish in the grace and mercy of God, as Paul does here in 1 Timothy 1, and they seek to walk by the Spirit so as to make known the mercy of God that they personally know in light of their own sin.

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<sup>3</sup> Harvey, pg. 43

- e. You see, the difference is like the difference seen in David in Psalm 32 and in Psalm 51. In Psalm 32 he is living in the refusal to see his sin as the greatest problem in his life. He is refusing to repent and he is clinging to his sin of lust, adultery, deceit, and murder. And his life is a wreck because of it. But in Psalm 51 he openly owns his sin before God and others, but primarily before God. His fear of the Lord is increased as he understands the great mercy of God in light of his own great sin. And because of this he knows once again the joy of his salvation that is found only in God.
- f. Your marriage can be lived in Psalm 32 or in Psalm 51, so to speak.

**Conclusion:** And so I ask you, do you know who the greatest threat is to your marriage? Do you understand that in your very heart there is a war waging between the Spirit and the flesh? Do you know that this poses the greatest threat to a Christ-exalting life and marriage? Will you be a student of your heart? Will you run to the Lord to show you your own wretchedness so that you can deepen in your understanding of His mercy and grace? Will you stop viewing your spouse or your circumstances or your lack of needs being met in your marriage as your greatest problem? Will you run to Christ and find in Him the eternal answers to your temporal battles? Let's pray!