

Overcoming Temptation: Understanding the Deceptive Process of Lust

I. WAGING THE WAR AGAINST LUST

¹¹ *I beg you as...pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul... (1 Pet. 2:11)*

A. The Christian life is a cooperation with God's grace. **God will not do our part** and **we cannot do His part**. If we do not do our part, then God withholds some of the blessing He wants to give us. **Our part** includes making quality decisions to deny ourselves (say no to sin), to feed our spirit on the Word, to ask for God's help through prayer with fasting, and to embrace godly activities (serving) and relationships (fellowshipping, confessing our sins), etc. **God's part** is to release supernatural influences on our heart (power, wisdom, desires), on our body (healing) and on our circumstances (provision, protection, direction) and relationships (favor).

B. We are in a spiritual conflict that has two battle fronts which includes both a **war inside** our heart (our personal battle with sinful desires for pleasure) and a **war outside** our heart (seeking the release of God's justice: in healing the sick, righteousness in government, winning the lost, etc.). While many acknowledge the war on the inside, they do not attack it with prayer.

²² *I delight in the law (Word) of God...²³ But I see another law (principle) in my members, warring against...my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin ... (Rom. 7:22-23)*

¹ *Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? (Jas. 4:1)*

C. Scripture speaks of lust warring in our "members" (includes our mind, emotions and physical appetites). Lust has many expressions including pride (most common), anger, covetousness, thefts, slander, bitterness, jealousies, immorality, pornography, drunkenness, over-indulgence with food or entertainment, plus legal and illegal addictions, etc. (Mk. 7:22; Gal. 5:19-20).

D. Our war with lust is difficult but it is the only way to enter the narrow gate (experience "life in the Spirit"). Without this paradigm, we become easily offended at God when our life is difficult.

¹⁴ *Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way...to life, and there are few who find it. (Mt. 7:14)*

E. Our yoke of intimacy with Jesus is **easy** in that God freely provides what we could never earn or produce. He gives us forgiveness, strength to live and rewards now and in the age-to-come that far outweigh what we deserve (2 Cor. 4:17-18). We receive His favor forever as we rule the universe with Him. God treats us with gentleness and does not give us what we deserve. We receive far more from God than we give Him. We are far ahead of where we should be.

³⁰ *For My yoke is easy and My burden is light. (Mt. 11:30)*

F. Denying our lustful desires is the theatre God chose for us to express our love to Him. Each of us has a different struggle according to our personality and circumstances. Thus, we each have a different "**assignment**" from which we offer our gift of love to God. Saying, "no" provides us an opportunity to express love to God. He takes it personal as we resist sin because we love Him.

²¹ *He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me... (Jn. 14:21)*

II. GOD WILL JUDGE ALL WHO REFUSE TO REPENT FROM IMMORALITY

³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification (purity): that you should abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel (body and soul) in sanctification and honor...⁶ that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified...⁸ He who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Spirit. (1 Thes. 4:3-8)

¹ It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you...that a man has his father's wife!
² And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you...⁵ deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh (to become sick) that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord (instead of losing his salvation). (1 Cor. 5:1-5)

²⁹ For he who eats and drinks (at the Lord's table) in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself...³⁰ for this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep (dead). ³¹ For if we would judge ourselves (repent of our sin), we would not be judged (by the Lord). (1 Cor. 11:29-31)

²⁰ I have a few things against you (Church of Thyatira), because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality...²¹ I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. ²² Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation unless they repent of their deeds. ²³ I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. I will give to each one of you according to your works. (Rev. 2:20-23)

¹⁸ Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body (opens the door to increased lust and/or judgment). (1 Cor. 6:18)

⁵ For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man...has any inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ. ⁶ Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. (Ephesians 5:5-6)

⁹ Do not be deceived...neither fornicators...nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰ nor thieves...nor drunkards...will inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Cor. 6:9-10)

III. SPIRIT OF IMMORALITY: OPERATES IN THE MIND AS IT IS FUELED BY SIGHT

²⁷ You have heard that it was said..., 'You shall not commit adultery.' ²⁸ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Mt. 5:27-28)

A. Jesus exposed how the operation of the spirit of immorality operates. It is rooted first in the mind (sexual imaginations) and is fueled by sight or “looking with lust” (in person or by the media). We operate in the spirit of immorality with thoughts that are fueled by sight and words.

¹ I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman? ⁹ If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or if I have lurked at my neighbor's door... (Job 31:1, 9)

- B. ***The progression of adultery:*** eye adultery leads to heart-adultery which leads to circumstances that lead to physical adultery. Principle: sexual purity and control is established first in the area of the eyes. It is easier to close the “eye gate” than to put out the fires of immoral passions.
- C. David affirmed the eye gate as the battle front to walk perfect (mature) before God (Mt. 5:48).
² ***I will behave wisely in a perfect (spiritually mature) way ...I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. 3 I will set nothing wicked before my eyes...*** (Ps. 101:2-3)

IV. ESSENTIAL BOUNDARIES: REFUSING CIRCUMSTANCES THAT INFLAME SIN IN US

- A. We are not to present our members as instruments of sin by putting ourselves in circumstances that stirs up lust. We must refuse to be in relationships or places which inflame lust in us. Many too easily put themselves in seemingly “innocent or harmless” situations that surprise them when they sin. Many are naïve and/or deceived about their propensity for lustful activity.
¹³ ***Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness...*** (Rom. 6:13)
- B. Jesus taught us to make hard decisions to break off relationships or refuse to go to places that result in sinning being stirred up in our lives. Jesus taught that regardless how costly it is, it is a much lower price than losing out in our relationship with God or in aspects of our eternal inheritance. The cost of non-discipleship is far higher than the cost of discipleship.
²⁹ ***If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. 30 If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.*** (Mt. 5:29-30)
- C. In familiar relationships, we must be honest in identifying the difference between “illegal touching” (often called “innocent touching”) and godly affection.
¹ ***It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*** (1 Cor. 7:1)

V. UNDERSTANDING THE SIX STAGES OF TEMPTATION

¹² ***Blessed is the man who endures (perseveres) temptation; for when he has been approved (found consistent by God), he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him...14 Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*** (Jas 1:12-15)

- A. We will receive the “crown of life” as our reward for enduring temptation, which speaks of persevering in our war against our lust (without giving in or giving up). This is a crown of authority in the age-to-come that God only gives to those who endure or persevere. God approves of those who have a track record of being faithful to consistently war against what tempts them. Paul spoke of such people as those who were found worthy or faithful over time.
¹¹ ***We pray always for you that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power...*** (2 Thes. 1:11)

- B. **Stage #1: Initial stirrings of lust** – Being drawn away by lustful desire occurs as our imagination is stirred up as we begin to casually think on the possibility of walking out lustful actions (pride, anger, covetousness, immorality, drunkenness, indulgence). Satan wants our fleeting thoughts of lust to become sustained thoughts (fantasy). There is a big difference between a momentary wrong thought and being captured by it. Stage one is the easiest stage to resist the power of lust.
- C. **Stage #2: Sustained lustful thoughts** – Being enticed with lust occurs when we become entrenched in lustful thinking. Our momentary fleeting lustful thoughts have escalated to sustained thoughts as we are captured in fantasy by continuing to think on lustful activities. Our imagination is energized by demonic power as we further open the door. We are now in the “storm of temptation.”
- D. **Stage #3: Decision to sin** – Lustful desire is conceived when we make the decision to walk out sinful actions. James uses the analogy of a baby in its mother’s womb. The decision to act out our lust causes our sinful behavior to become “alive.” As a child is alive at conception, yet is not seen by others, so a newly conceived act of sin is “alive” in us, yet it is still unseen by others.
- E. **Stage #4: Acting out sin** – Lustful desire gives birth to sin when we act out our lustful desires. At the time of birth, a baby comes forth so that its features can clearly be seen. So also, when lust gives birth to action, the specific features of our lust are now openly manifest. When we act out sin, we give Satan a legal door of entry into our lives that he might work in a greater way in us.
- F. **Stage #5: Sinful addictions** – Sin becomes full-grown (sin grows up) in us as we become addicted to various lusts (slander, immorality, covetous, etc). Our lust does not just stop with one act or conversation, but continues to grow up until it is full-grown unless we repent (Eph. 4:22). Our capacities for specific lusts are progressively enlarged in us, as we act out our lust. Eventually they become addictions that are much more difficult to overcome. Full grown sin is less satisfying and much more depressing. It leaves us with increasingly worse consequences that bring loss, shame and pain. Our conscience is wounded, weakened and dulled by sinful actions as we get more comfortable in our sin (1 Tim. 4:2).
- G. **Stage #6: Consequences of sin** – Sin brings forth death (loss, pain, shame). Sinful actions progressively destroy our life as we reap more of their negative consequences. This is manifest in circumstances as well as in quenching and dulling our spirit. It injures our family, ministry, relationships, finances and a part of our destiny in God.
- ²³ **For the wages of sin is death (loss, pain and shame). (Rom. 6:23)**
- H. We only have two choices, either we die voluntarily to its lustful lure in righteousness or we die involuntarily because we yielded to it and now reap its shame and painful consequences. If we die voluntarily to sin by denying it then we receive a great reward (Mt. 16:24-27; Jn. 12:24)
- ²⁴ **If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25...whoever loses his life for My sake will find it... (Mt. 16:24-25)**