

Loving Righteousness: Making a Covenant of Purity with Our Eyes (2 Corinthians 6)

2 Corinthians 6:1-7: tonight, I want to talk about loving righteousness in some practical ways. I want to focus on making a covenant of purity with our eyes

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS A COOPERATION WITH GOD’S GRACE

2 Corinthians 6:1-7: “We as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.’ Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation . . . We commend ourselves as ministers of God . . . by the armor of righteousness.” Paul pleaded not to receive the grace of God in vain. You know what: we can receive the grace of God in vain as believers by failing to cooperate with the grace of God in a way that I am going to describe in just a moment.

In 2 Corinthians 6:2, the Lord says: “In an acceptable time I heard you, and in the day of salvation, I have helped you.” Then Paul announces this glorious reality. Now catch this: this is the glorious reality. Behold now, that is the word you want to emphasize, “now” is the acceptable time. Because Jesus went to the cross today, “now” is the perpetual time where God says yes. He goes on to say: “behold, now is the day of salvation”—or you could add there that today is the day of deliverance. Now is the day God promised to deliver you from the enemy’s tactics against you. Every day is the now day in God.

WE MUST RECEIVE GOD’S EMPOWERING GRACE TO OVERCOME LUST

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 6:4: “We commend ourselves as ministers of God.” He gives a list of ways that he offers himself to the people as ministers of God. In 2 Corinthians 6:7: “by the armor of righteousness.”

The point that I want to focus on tonight is the fact that when we choose righteousness, when we make godly choices for righteousness, it acts as an armor that thwarts the enemy’s attack against us. The enemy is constantly raging against us. There are various dimensions of our armor against the enemy. But the choosing of righteousness is a dimension of our protection. There is no substitute for choosing righteousness. Some people just cry out and pray. Prayer is part of our armor, but they pray, and they say, “Lord, help me. Lord, help me.”

The Lord responds, “I will help you. You do need to pray, but only as you choose righteousness, can I help you.” So the ability to choose righteousness is a protection against the work of the enemy against us. But know this: today, everyday since Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead and from His resurrection, every day is the day of deliverance, or the day of salvation for the believer. Now God requires us to work together with Him. Notice how Paul says that we are workers together with the Lord. We cooperate with the Lord. Now God’s desire for us is to work together with Him. It is His desire for partnership with us, meaning that God could just run His kingdom without us, but He says, “No, I am only going to do it in partnership with you.”

GOD REQUIRES US TO WORK TOGETHER WITH HIM IN HIS GRACE

God will not do our part, and we cannot do His part. Now, I say that over and over again, but it needs to be said that many times. God will not do our part. If we do not choose righteousness, the Lord says, “I will not choose it for you. I will not violate your free will. I will wait and wait until you choose. Until you voluntarily make the choices that bring your heart into voluntary agreement with My heart.” We cannot do God’s part, and God will

not do our part. Now, our part: there are a number of dimensions to our part, but I am only focusing on one tonight. We need to make quality decisions. This means a sincere decision that we stick with. That is what a quality decision is. It is a sincere heartfelt decision; one we stick with when the pressure is on. We must make quality decisions, decisions we stick with to deny sin in our life.

I know this is really fundamental, but it is amazing how many Christians are waiting for God to deliver them from their lust, but they will not say no to their lust. They are waiting on God, but God is waiting on them. They are a bit confused.

GOD WILL NOT DO OUR PART, AND WE CANNOT DO HIS PART

Some think, “I have been praying, but He will not help me.”

He answers, “I will not deliver you in a way that is contrary to the way I run My kingdom. I will not do your part.” The analogy I have used over the years is that of the farmer and the preacher. The preacher goes over to have dinner at the farmer’s house. He sees the great farm. It is beautifully cultivated and manicured. He says, “Farmer, God blessed you with this farm. It is awesome. Look at this awesome farm.”

The farmer says, “Preacher, when God had this farm, it was a mess.” See God is not going to plant the seed. God is not going to weed the garden. God is not going to cultivate the garden. If we trust God to cultivate the garden, the garden will be a mess; but then the farmer cannot make life work in the seed. The farmer cannot produce sunlight, and the farmer cannot produce the rain.

NOTHING CAN SUBSTITUTE THE CHOOSING OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

God has His part. We have our part, and that is by God’s design. Nothing substitutes for the choosing of righteousness. We must choose it. We absolutely must choose it. Now there is a false teaching that is going around the kingdom of God today. It has been really increasing the last couple of decades actually. That is false teaching on grace. I comment on this regularly. It is a teaching on the grace of God that makes people comfortable while they are sinning. It is as if this teaching says, “You know that is not that big of a deal.” It is this idea that, “Well, we are asking God for His grace. So we believe that somehow things are just going to work out on their own in grace. Because we believe in grace, we believe that God will somehow work everything out.”

That is not true if what we mean by that is that somehow the sin is just going to leave, and we are just going to stop sinning one day. We are waiting on God; I mean many of these folks are waiting on God to deliver them, but God is waiting on them to make a quality decision.

FALSE GRACE MESSAGE

False teaching on grace minimizes the need to make a decision. I am going to focus in a few minutes on sexual immorality. Sexual immorality is something that is growing significantly across the earth, particularly through the Internet. Immorality is going to go to heights never known in human history. I mean imagine where immorality is going to go when technology develops with the holograms. You know, where there is going to be whole sins enacted out by technology in a light that will seem real, and people can determine this. People have it right there in their living room. Beyond anything we can imagine. The days are coming when there will be several billion people on the earth involved in this kind of activity for years and years. The amount of demonized people with sexual perversion on the earth will be an astounding number before Jesus returns.

RIGHTEOUSNESS IS AN ARMOR THAT THWARTS SATAN'S ATTACK

This is an issue that we must deal with at the root, now, in these days and in this time. Peter said in 1 Peter 2:11: "I beg you as . . . pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul . . ." Peter begged his hearers to abstain from these lusts. They war against us. Lust wars against our heart. It wars against our heart all the days of our life. Now, lust is not all limited to sexual immorality. That is one category of lust.

There are a number of types of lust. Anger is a type of lust. Pride is the most dominant prevailing lust that the human race knows about. Pride is a lust. But tonight, I am looking particularly at the subject of choosing righteousness and saying no to sexual immorality.

WE MUST COME TO GOD ON GOD'S TERMS, AND LOVE HIM ON HIS TERMS

John 14:21: "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me" . . . Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word." Jesus said that it is the person who keeps God's commandments who is the person who loves God. Then He goes on, and repeats it again. John 14:23: "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word." Jesus defines what loving Him consists of.

Now what man wants to do is to love God in our own way. We cannot love God in our way. We have to love God on His terms. But the spirit of humanism, just human thinking and human reasoning, says, "No, I am going to love God in my own way and in my own style." But Jesus would say to this: "If loving Me does not include setting your heart to obey Me, I do not receive it as sincere love."

OBEDIENCE IS OFFERING OUR GIFT OF LOVE TO GOD

Now, this is troubling to the religions of the world. Jesus calls all the religions of the world false, as well as members of the Body of Christ who do not set obedience in their lives. Jesus says that they do not love Him—that is what He is declaring. Again, we cannot love God on our own terms. We have to love Him on His terms. He must define the way that we love Him. Now this is one of my hundred favorite verses. You know that you get to have a hundred favorite verses. This is one of them.

But I want to highlight this verse to you and another in a minute. This is a verse that I use many times when the enemy comes to tempt my heart with any kind of compromise: whether mental, physical, or verbal compromise. If I am not obeying the Holy Spirit's leadership, I love to speak this verse to the enemy when I feel tempted. Jesus says that the one who has His commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Him. I like to declare, "In the name of Jesus, I have His commandments, and I will keep them because I am one who loves Him. I am one who loves Him. Jesus, I am one who loves You." Or I say this to the enemy: "I am one who loves Him. I will keep His commandments. Be gone in the name of Jesus."

OUR OBEDIENCE BEGINS WHEN WE SIMPLY SET OUR HEARTS TO OBEY

Beloved, we speak the Word of God to the enemy when our soul is tempted. This is one of my favorite ones. I encourage you to use it. Denying our lust, whether it is anger, pride, immorality, or denying lust—this is the theater in which God has given us to express our love to Jesus. I mean what a glorious thing that we can love Jesus in a way that moves His heart. He looks at lust waging war against us, and He says, "If you will deny the lust, I will take that action as love. That is an avenue, a platform, in which you can show Me you love Me."

We tell the Lord, "But Lord, this lust is waging war."

He responds, “I know. I know you feel it. I know it never seems to stop, but if you resist it, I will take it as love that you are giving Me.” What a glorious reality! Now each believer in the Body of Christ, each believer has a different struggle. I mean it is all the same general categories, but in a different application. Every one of us: our emotions are different; our life situation is different; our calling that God is preparing us for in the future is different. So each one of us has a very unique assignment in which we are to show Jesus our love. We are to give Him the gift of our love out of our own unique struggle, our own assignment of that which God calls us to overcome.

You might say, “Well, I have this desire and that desire, this thing has come up against me. This set-up. This is my calling.” It is unique from the person next to you. It is very different.

The Lord would answer: “That is the assignment that I have given you to overcome. That particular set of troubles in your heart and in your life—that is the assignment that I have asked you to love Me in.”

We respond, “Well Lord, I have a greater propensity to this, or that, or the other than other people do.”

The Lord says, “Well, that is my assignment to you. Overcome and show Me that you love Me.” Now it is important to note this. I spoke on this the other night when we spoke on the Song of Solomon. It is a very important principle. Obedience does not begin with full victory, when victory is fully accomplished in our character. Obedience is not only real when the victory is full. Obedience is real when we set our heart to obey, long before we get the outward victory.

When you say, “Lord, I will obey You in this,” but you have not proven it fully in your character, but you have set your heart to war against it, that is success. Beloved, that is where obedience begins, and the Lord values that obedience. The reason I am making that point is because when we set our heart to obey the Lord even though we do not have victory in our character, we start by simply choosing to war against it faithfully. We are rebuking it. We are declaring our heart to God to obey Him in that area. When we do this, we have every reason to feel the Lord’s pleasure while we are growing up in the Lord.

THE LORD TAKES PLEASURE WHEN OUR HEARTS ARE SET TO OBEY

The Lord does not just have pleasure toward you after you get the victory. He actually has pleasure toward you while you are growing month-by-month, year-by-year, if, in fact, you are declaring war on the issue that you are stumbling in. You are fighting it, and you are resisting it. Yes, you are stumbling, but you are repenting and rejoining the war against that area that is waging war in your heart. The reason this is important is because when we are repenting and declaring war on that, the Lord is smiling over us even before we have the breakthrough. When we know that, we run *to* the Lord instead of *from* the Lord because we feel that He is happy with us instead of angry at us.

THE DEVIL WANTS US TO FEEL CONDEMNED AND TO GIVE INTO DESPAIR AND SIN

Even though we are still stumbling, God takes pleasure in us; but the enemy will tell you differently. He will say, “Look, you are a hopeless hypocrite.” The Devil will say, “You are still struggling in that area. Just give up, give in and quit.” Many people who do not understand God’s heart only see obedience to the measure of how they are walking in it in their outward character. They are saying, “It is never going to happen.”

Then they have despair, they have hopelessness, and they just want to quit. The Holy Spirit is saying, “No, no, do not quit. I see you warring. The Lord is pleased with you. My heart is for you.” Beloved, we can run to Him with confidence that He loves us and that we love Him even before we have full victory. The setting of the heart for righteousness is where the beginning of victory takes place.

WE WANT FULL VICTORY IN OUR BEHAVIOR

Now having said that, I am not content just to have that beginning of victory; I want the full manifestation of victory in my character. I am not content with just receiving mercy with confidence and knowing that God likes me. I like that. I mean I really like that, but I want to go on. I want to follow through. I want victory in every area of my life. Why? Obedience is an expression of love to the Lord. The Lord says, “If you will obey Me in these areas, I will take it personally. I will take it as though you love Me. I will see it as a statement of love.”

James 1:12: “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” This is another one of these top hundred favorite life verses. Oh I love this verse. I quote this verse a lot like I do John 14:21. Here is what it says—you want to write this one down. Mark it. Put it in your Bible. Learn it to where you do not have to carry it around on a little card or some index card. I used to write them on those kinds of things, and just carry them around, look at them, put them in my pocket, and memorize them. I have said this so many times. I just say, “Lord, this is what I want.”

CONSISTENTLY FAITHFUL TO OBEY UNDER PRESSURE OF TEMPTATION

Here is what it says; here is a promise in James 1:12: “Blessed is the man”—or blessed is the woman—“who endures temptation; for when that person has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.” The crown of life is that which the Lord has promised to the people who love Him. Now what this verse is talking about: it is talking about those who are approved. What it means to be approved by God: it is in the age to come where He approves us. It is after our life is over.

The Body of Christ from all of history will stand before the Lord. There might be one or two billion saints or more, possibly two or three billion. And so I believe millions will receive this promise. But I believe that hundreds of millions will not receive this promise. The crown of life is not the promise of eternal life. The crown of life is the promise for leadership in the age to come. Now whatever you do, do not take your theology from funerals. You know you go to a funeral, and the guy gets up. Every single time they say, “Well so and so has received his crown” as though every born again believer has a crown.

THE CROWN OF LIFE IS THE REWARD FOR ENDURING IN OBEDIENCE

That is not what this passage is teaching. That is where they get this. They get it from this passage. It is like in society where if everyone on the earth had a crown, then nobody would have a crown that meant anything. A crown is a distinguishing—it is a distinguishing reality that only those in leadership and government have crowns. And only a small percent of believers will have crowns.

But the crown of life is promised to the man or woman who endures temptation. Now, what a phrase: “endure temptation.” Do you know why it is called enduring temptation? Because the Devil comes day after day, he knocks on the door. He says, “I am coming. I am coming.”

We say, “Leave me alone. I already told you I am not buying today.”

The Devil says, “I am coming over and over.” It is oppressive. It never stops. It requires endurance to obey God. The decision that we make today, we have to remake tomorrow, and the next day, and the next day. Do we every get free of making this decision? The answer is no. Not in this life. We must make the decision. Now our emotions change: we begin to love righteousness, and so the intensity of the decisions changes; but we must always make decisions to obey the Lord in this life. So it is called enduring temptation because it is a reality that we have to choose again and again.

SAYING “NO” PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS LOVE TO JESUS

There is no one’s choice that settles all the other choices. You cannot go up front to a prayer time, they lay hands on you, and then all of the sudden, your necessity to make choices is now alleviated. It is not as if you are all of a sudden on automatic pilot, and we do not make choices. No. It does not work that way. We are called to endure it. The man or the woman through the years who consistently says no to darkness wins. I mean it is an endurance test. It is as if James says, “I promise you this from the Lord. When the Lord approves you on the final day” (1:12, paraphrased). Nobody does this perfectly by the way. This is not a perfect attainment of this whether it is the apostles, or the great leaders of the Body of Christ through history. Nobody does this perfectly, but we can still do it consistently.

The guy says, “Well, you know for years, I have not really done this as a believer. I have just yielded and yielded.” Beloved, start today! Start today. They say, “Well, I could start today with a new zeal, but I have wasted so many years.” You know what? Those years are gone. You cannot get those years back. I do not know what to tell you about those years except that they are gone. But you might have another year, ten years, or you may have fifty years ahead of you. Start today. You do not know how many years you have. Begin to endure temptation by saying no to the enemy knocking on the door. He just does not stop. Will he ever let up? He will not. He will not. He tempted Jesus. He did not have a chance, but he tempted Him anyway. He is unrelenting. The Devil is unrelenting.

REWARDED FOR OUR OBEDIENCE IN OUR WAR WITH LUST

The Lord says, “If you will endure it and resist it, I will take it personally. I will see it as an expression of loving me. Notice the crown of life is promised to the people who love Jesus, meaning their love is displayed by resisting temptation. Again, my message tonight—I am just focusing on the need to make choices. Because there is so much talk in the Body of Christ about grace, help, and all these things, we need to talk about God’s help, God’s grace, and His mercy. But sometimes, we just need to settle the issue that we are waiting on the Lord to deliver us while He is waiting on us to make a quality decision. We are thinking, “How come I am not getting deliverance?”

God answers, “Because My power will not be manifest until you make a choice, you are against it.” Well, I have gotten these emotions, and they are really wrong; but they are fully inflamed in my heart. He says, “You declare war, and in time, I will deliver you, but you have to declare war against them. I will not do this for you. You must do it.”

We ask the Lord, “Will you help me? Will you help me if You want to?”

God responds, “Yes. I will help you.” It is a legitimate prayer to say, “Lord, help me to want to.” But do not camp there too long because you can get into a lot of deception and say, “He has not helped me to want Him, so I guess I am free until then.” No, no do not go there. You can waste a lot of time in the enemy’s camp even as a

born-again believer with that mindset. Beloved, I want the crown of life. The crown of life is not synonymous with eternal life. It is the gift of leadership and government in the age to come in His kingdom.

CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

2 Timothy 4:8: “Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.” Paul talked about the crown of life. He said it differently than James. He called it the crown of righteousness. I believe it is the same crown. Now some people mistake this verse because they think, “Well, I love His appearing.” What they mean is: “I would love the rapture to come today.” That is not what this verse means.

It does not mean that the Lord will give the crown of righteousness to everyone who hopes the rapture comes today. That is how a lot of people think about it. The rapture is not coming until after the great revival, and the great trouble takes place on the earth. The Lord says to the people who love the entire context. I do not mean that we like the negative and the evil, but we are girding ourselves to show love to Him in the most difficult time of history. We are not drawing back. We are not giving up. We are not giving in. We are getting ready because we love the entire context; He has chosen to enter the earth again. There will be tremendous trouble and tremendous revival. We are buying into it with all of our heart. We are getting ready. We love it.

That is what He is talking about—men and women of endurance. He is not talking to anybody who wishes to escape any minute now crown of righteousness is given—it is a place of leadership in the age to come unrelated to your leadership role in this age. You may have no leadership in the kingdom in this age, but you may have significant leadership in the age to come. Having leadership in the kingdom of God is not about being over people. It is about working near Jesus in His leadership. I want to work near Him. I want to be with Him where He is. I want to be doing what He is doing in the age to come. That is what we are talking about.

THE POSITIVE SIDE OF OUR STRUGGLE IS SAYING NO

Well, the positive side of the struggle: I mean there is this struggle of sin. Sin is hitting us, pulling us, and tugging on us. The positive side is this: this struggle that we are resisting is giving us an opportunity to express love to Jesus in a way that He remembers and esteems. He values it. Every time we resist it, the pride, the lust, the immorality, the anger, the paying the guy back, or doing somebody in, we win. We resist it because we say in our heart, “I love You Jesus.”

He says, “I take it personally, and I will remember it. I will remember it forever. I mean what a glorious opportunity. I mean I do not want more trouble, but it is an opportunity. We only have a short time in our eternal life to make choices like this in this age. We are only in this age for a minute.

We are billions of years in this age—in the future. We are only here for a moment, and the choices we make, Jesus will take them personally forever. He will be endeared by those choices. It is only in this age that we make righteous decisions in the presence of temptation. In the age to come, we will not make decisions in the face of temptation, only now. He says, “I have given you a short opportunity, a few years on the earth.” Seventy years, the Bible calls it but a moment. You choose it. God says, “I will value it. I will remember it. It will endear My heart—the choices that you make.” Beloved, I want to make these choices. I want to seize the opportunity. I do not like temptations and struggles, but I want the opportunity to choose in the fire of temptation to choose Him day by day. He loves it. He writes it in His book. He says, “Mike, we will talk all

about that when you get up here. I say, “Oh, I love it.” I get to do something that is exciting the heart of Jesus. That is the upside of it.

LEARNING TO POSSESS OUR BODIES IN HONOR

1 Thessalonians 4:3-10 is a very, very important passage: “This is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor . . . that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such . . . He who rejects this does not reject man, but God.” It says this is the will of God. 1 Thessalonians 4:3: “This is the will of God: your sanctification.” You could put the word there your purity.

Sanctification and purity are the same idea. Your holiness, your obedience, put whatever word you want in there. It comes down to the same thing. Here he goes on to spell it out. He says that in particular, you would abstain. In other words, refuse. To abstain means to refuse sexual immorality. To abstain means we make a choice. Even though the temptation is strong, we choose against it. He says, “This is the will of God.”

Now here is the exciting thing: Whenever God commands us to do something in that commandment, it is the promise of the enabling to help us if we will choose to line up with God’s heart. In everything God commands us to do, if we will make the choice to agree with it, if we will come into agreement with it, God will help us to obey it. Every command is the promise of the enabling to walk it out. Now here is what He says: this is the will of God, or you could say it this way: this is what God promises to help you in. If you will agree with Him, He will help you in this: that you would abstain from sexual immorality. He goes on to say that each one of you would know how to possess his own vessel.

WE MUST LEARN HOW TO POSSESS OUR VESSEL IN HONOR AND PURITY

That means that each one of us would learn to possess our body in honor before God, or in purity. That is what God is calling us to do—to learn how to possess, or to carry, our personhood in the presence of temptation. Beloved, do you know how to possess your vessel, or your body, in honor and in purity?

Here is what Paul is saying: He is calling the saints to study how their body, their mind, and their emotions work. You need to be a student of how you work, and how you feel. A lot of people do not even pay attention to it. It is as if Paul says, “Learn how to possess your vessel, or your body this way.” It takes attentiveness. Take notes as the Holy Spirit gives you insight and when you fail, take a step back and say, “What happened? Why did I fail? What excited me to where I gave myself? What were the contributing factors?” Everyone has a different personality set-up in terms of their whole personhood, and how it works. Study how temptation affects your personality by knowing what specific situations make you vulnerable to specific sinful desires. Like for instance, in the realm of immorality, study fatigue: a person gets tired, then they get in a desperate mood of depression. Then they hear the wrong music. They watch the wrong movie. They go to the wrong places. “Well, it is only a sports bar that I am going to.” But you are tired. You are depressed. You are angry with people for mistreating you. That is a perfect set-up to fall into immorality. “It is? I never thought.” Think about how your body works, and how your emotions work. The whole set-up is working together to bring you down. “Oh.”

So when things go bad, and you are in a real bad mood do not go there. Do not call up the Christians who have a view of the grace of God where sinning is just fine. Go call the other guys. Just say, “You know what? I am just in a mess right now. I am totally in a funk. Do not talk to me. Just let me come over and visit you. I do not even want to talk, but I do not want to go somewhere else right now.” Well, praise God, we have got the house

of prayer. Just come sit in it. Just chain yourself to the chair. Someone walks by and says, “Uh oh. You are having a tough day?”

You say, “Yeah, I am chained to the chair.” I am just kidding about that. See, it is a difficult, or disappointing situation. Things are really bad. They are really disappointing. A friend betrayed them. A little bit of alcohol, the right setting, the right time of day, which is typically night, and they are out there in just the right context, and all of a sudden, the next day they say, “Oh, I did not think I was going to do that.”

THE COMMANDS OF GOD ALWAYS CONTAIN THE PROMISE OF HIS POWER

Paul instructed us to learn how to possess your body in honor. Paul is instructing us to learn how you work particularly in specific ways. Do not be surprised for twenty-five years that it always turns out badly when that set up is there. You know they say the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over, but expecting different results. So the guy gets depressed. It is late at night. He gets his alcohol. He goes to the right place, gets with the wrong people and walks in immorality. Wow that shocked me. OK. He does it again and again. Insanity is doing the same thing over and over, but expecting it somehow to turn out different. Beloved, learn how to possess your body. Because all these different factors work together against you: your emotions and your circumstances. I urge you to take this very seriously. I am going to skip, on the way there, a couple of verses that talk about how God will discipline us because He loves us. If we get into immorality and we stay in it, He will discipline us. That is the passages that I am skipping. There are a number of Bible passages, which make it clear. The Lord tells us, “I will give you time, but you must repent. You have a limited time, or I will discipline you. I will make it uncomfortable for you to continue in immorality.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EYE GATE

We are going to look at Matthew 5:28-29. Jesus exposes how the spirit of immorality works. Jesus warns us in Matthew 5:28-29: “Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out . . . for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.” Whoever looks at a woman, Matthew 5:28, to lust for her in his heart, he has already committed adultery.

When he gazes with lust, and he locks in, he is committing adultery in his heart. We are suppose to be radical, and if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. Now, He does not really mean pluck it out. He says, “Go to extreme measures to change the situation that is inflaming your heart in lust and sexual immorality.”

PROGRESSION OF ADULTERY

Now the progression of adultery goes this way: eye adultery that is where it begins—eye adultery. Then it grows to heart adultery. We stare, we see, and we look. That is how the human heart works. With eye adultery, it grows into heart adultery. Then the fantasy gets locked in. Then heart adultery ends up in physical adultery. People do not just commit physical adultery in a vacuum. They commit physical adultery as the end of a series of giving themselves in more subtle secret ways to adultery. The guy says, “Well, he just committed physical adultery. I do not know where it came from.”

I say that fire has been burning for a long time. You do not just do that one-day without doing the other two for a long time.

A COVENANT WITH HIS EYES

Job 31:1-4: “I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman? For what is the allotment of God from above, And the inheritance of the Almighty from on high? Is it not destruction for the wicked, And disaster for the workers of iniquity? Does He not see my ways, And count all my steps.” Job 31:1 about making a covenant with our eyes is a verse that really marked my heart as a young man. I went to a Bill Gothard conference when I was about seventeen or eighteen years old. Some of you have never heard of Bill Gothard, but he had these huge ten thousand kind of conferences all over America and one of the things, I went several times, he taught this every time: Job 31. Our whole youth group was captured with Job 31:1. Here is what Job said in Job 31:1, 9: “I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman? If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or if I have lurked at my neighbor’s door . . .”

A COVENANT OF THE EYES TO GUARD SEXUAL PURITY

Job said that because he made a covenant with his eyes, why then should I look upon a young woman? He meant with lust. If my heart has been secretly enticed, or if I lurked at the neighbor’s doorway, he means lurked to stare with lustful desires; then he says, “I deserve God’s discipline.” That is how he ends that passage. After reading this, I made a covenant with my eyes where I would not give myself to these kinds of things.

Beloved, it is much easier to shut the eye gate in the realm of immorality, rather than the raging fire of immoral desires that are burning and building in our life. We have to shut the door from the eye gate. We turn our eyes away, and the other fires are far less dangerous. They are still there, but they are far more manageable. If we have our eye gate open to sin—and where things are going on the Internet—it is so dangerous. It is not OK. It is dangerous in a very, very serious way because if we do not make a covenant with our eyes, our imagination will get so defiled and so destroyed.

Now I remember we went to this: you know a bunch of us young people did, and we all made this covenant. It has been a very important verse in my life for thirty-five years, this verse Job 31:1. I have not obeyed it perfectly, but I have obeyed it in a serious way for many, many, many years. For thirty-five or thirty—however long—I am fifty-two, so I guess that is thirty-five years.

I remember when I was eighteen and nineteen years old at the university. I was at a large university in Missouri with 30,000 students. It was a big one where there was so much lewd dressing, girls and guys both. Even back in the seventies it was bad. I remember this verse was so important to me. I would go through the campus and when I would look at a girl I would—I made a commitment in my heart, I did this a thousand times—I would look her in the eyes. Maybe I would be caught unaware, and it was not a good situation. I would look her in the eyes. She did not know. I would pray for her salvation. I did not do it so she would get saved. I did it because it is really hard to lust when you are praying for someone’s salvation. It just messes the whole thing up. I did this myself. I taught all the young men. I mean I was eighteen or nineteen. They were eighteen or nineteen. I said, “Guys, let’s do this. I mean with resilience, let’s commit our heart to this.”

CLOSING THE EYE GATE HELPS GUARD SEXUAL PURITY

I tell you: whether in the Church or out of the Church, if you will look them in the face, I do not mean to get their attention, but instead of looking at other parts of their body, and if you are looking, and your heart is being pulled. If you will just take five seconds or ten seconds, ask the glory of God to touch that young woman, or it can be women to men these days. There are so many other things going on in the Internet that is really developing. We need to completely abstain from that.

Now this whole Internet thing began some years ago. I made a covenant based on Job 31:1: I made a covenant. I want some of you—you know—you have already really gone deep in the Internet thing. But, I tell you I want you to join me today with this covenant. Let today be the first day. Here is what I made a covenant to do. I am not trying to say this to condemn you. I am saying it because I want to inspire a whole company of fourteen-year-olds to buy into this. I made a covenant many years ago. I said this: I will not look at Internet pornography one time, not once in my entire life, not once ever. Not one single time. I set my heart to do that, and by the grace of God, He is keeping my heart steady.

I am so cautious about this covenant; I even make other people do the Google stuff for me for research. I do not even want to accidentally. I want to meet the Lord never once having seen pornography on the Internet, not even a glimpse. Not one time ever. That is my heart's desire. I believe by the grace of God, I will be able to do that. But here is what I am calling you to do. I am calling you not to just say, "I am going to ask for help." No. Go way beyond that. Make a radical decision: never again will I ever go there. Not one more time. I am not going to reduce it; I am never going to do it. Never again, even until I meet Jesus; never again, not once.

TEMPTATION IS REALLY HAVING OPTIONS

I tell you temptation—the definition of temptation is options. It really is. You get rid of the options. I do not even have an option to go there. It is not even an option. It is not on my mind ever because it is not an option. I do not think, "Man, I wish I could go to the Internet." It is never on my mind. I am not trying to play you know holier than thou because it is not an option that I think about. Beloved, I want to call you to do this. I am calling the women to it as well to make this covenant with your eyes. You will never look on anything on the Internet that entices you. But there is enough on TV these days that is going in the wrong direction, so do not just limit it to the Internet, but this is a covenant we are making all the days of our life. You know: there is a lot of talk about the gals even in the Body of Christ wearing enticing, seductive clothing.

WE MUST MAKE A QUALITY DECISION TO FLEE IMMORALITY

The guys, well the girls are doing it. Well, you know what I am going to just let the girls off the hook tonight. There is a time to address that. Well, I will talk to the girls for one second. Ask the Holy Spirit if He is pleased with the level of morality, of seduction—I mean the level of purity. Or do you wear seductive clothing? Do not get your standard from the magazines in the malls? Get your standard from the Holy Spirit. Do not look at all the magazines and say, "I want to be cute like her in the magazine."

What do you mean cute like her? She is filled with seduction. That is not your role model. Girls say, "Well, she is just so cute." Where in the world are we getting our standards? Guys too: guys get their standards from the magazines too. There is a lot of seductive dress that men are involved in too. I am talking about in the kingdom of God. I am talking about guys and gals at IHOP. Their consciences are dull and their minds are blinded. They love Jesus, but they have blind spots in their thinking and in their discernment. Men and women, ask the Holy Spirit. That is not even what was my point. Here is my point. Guys: do not complain about the girls, saying, "If they change, then I will change." No, you are going to set your heart to make a covenant with God. If none of them change, you are still going to keep your covenant with God. I am not depending on a revolution in the Church to keep my purity. I am not waiting on them to change—whoever them is. I am determined to keep a covenant in my heart with the Lord because I want to. I want to endure temptation, and be approved of the Lord as a person who walks steady with the Lord.

FLEE SEDUCTION, LUST, AND IMMORALITY

It is a lot easier to shut the eye gate than it is to put out the raging fires of immorality. Beloved, if you think immorality is bad in 2007, think in the next twenty years, immorality will be so prevalent on the planet—it will be. You do not want to wait for ten years. I am saying this seriously because you can get demons of perversion even as a believer.

Demons: you invite them in, and they will come. Believers can have demons of perversion that are camping out. Believers can have demons that are part of their life because they can invite them in through opening these doors. Then, they say, “Well, I am just going to hang in there for about ten or fifteen years, and then I am going to get serious.” Beloved, you will end up with so many demons in your life. I really mean this, and demons are unrelenting. They have no mercy at all. They want you completely devoured by the cries of lust in your being. You will lose your life in God. It is going to get worse and worse. There is only one possible way forward in 2007. We are here together. We are going to go headlong into this with a covenant of our eyes to be wholly the Lord’s. If you have made that covenant and lost it, make it again.

Beloved, I have set that covenant. I have not kept it 100 percent over the years. I am talking about the thirty-five years, but I want to say this: whenever I would step over that line, I would re-declare war on lust in my heart. I would reset that covenant; I mean each year, I would remake that covenant. I would declare it to the Lord 10,000 times in my private life. I have declared that covenant. I renew it day by day. It is not that I want to be better than other people. I want my soul vibrant and alive in God in an evil culture. You can have it too.

DAVID SET HIS HEART TO KEEP HIS EYE GATE PURE AND SET NOTHING WICKED

David did it. Here is the other verse. Psalm 101:2-3: “I will behave wisely in a perfect way . . . I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set nothing wicked before my eyes.” David said that he would behave wisely in a perfect way. When he says, “perfect” in Psalm 101:2, he means a spiritually mature way. Perfect does not mean, “perfect” in the absolute sense of perfection. It means mature. Now he gives the details of how he set his heart to behave wisely, He said, “I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.” In other words, David is saying, “I am declaring war on everything that is dark. I am agreeing with what is light.” Here is the premier issue: David said in Psalm 101:2-3: “I will behave wisely in a perfect way. Oh, when will You come to me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me.” You could add, “in the privacy of my home,” or you can add “my office.”

Beloved, we want to be men and women with a heart after God like David. I want to challenge you with Psalm 101. I have used this Psalm so many times along with Job 31. You want to say it over and over. “Father, I come. I will set nothing wicked before my eyes.” I am talking about whether it is movies, Internet, pornography, magazine, we choose to set nothing wicked before my eyes in the privacy of my own home. I will walk wisely before God even in the privacy of my house. Amen. Let’s stand. Oh, I want the freedom to live and walk in the love of God and to feel His power. I love feeling God’s power. God has this for every one of us.



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