

## Lustful Desires

Proverbs 6:25; Matthew 5:28

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We speak today of the hidden sin of lust, which we all go to great lengths to conceal from one another. This seems to be one of those sins that we are even ashamed to speak of before others until it finally becomes so aggravated that it has led us captive not only in our minds and affections, but in our behavior and actions as well. Then it is no longer buried within our hearts, but has so expressed itself outwardly that we cannot keep it a secret any longer.

Although it is a sin which we would prefer to avoid addressing publicly, for that very reason, it is a sin which we must not avoid addressing from the pulpit. For such secret sins will not be mortified in our lives if we avoid them because they are too embarrassing. Such hidden sins will not be crucified if ministers will not preach against them and help the flock of Jesus Christ to overcome them by taking these hidden sins out of the darkness in which they cloak themselves and rather exposing them to the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps some may even think that lust is not a sin if there is neither intent nor outward expression to fulfill those desires. For in such cases (so some wickedly reason) one has exercised self-control in not fulfilling the desires of his flesh. The Church of Rome unites hands with most unbelievers in promoting such a false view of lust. That is why I heard recently a Romish priest openly acknowledge in a public interview that his own personal sexual orientation is homosexual (i.e. he desires homosexual relationships). But he supposedly cleared himself by saying he restrains himself from engaging in homosexual relationships. Because he does not intend to do so, nor actually engages in sodomy, he reasons (contrary to Jesus Christ in Matthew 5:28) that his lust is not a sin.

I have even heard and read from so-called Christian counselors that it is an acceptable therapy for those married couples who have difficulty in their intimate life to pretend or to fantasize in their imaginations that they are being intimate with some male or female to whom they are attracted. Again this proceeds from the abominable premise that lust in the imagination is not sinful if there is no intent or act to fulfill one's desires. All such pastors, elders, or counselors are false shepherds and will stand before God to give an account for their encouraging people to break the Tenth Commandment in making it acceptable to lust after someone to whom they are not married.

However, we have authoritatively declared unto us in the very last of God's Ten Commandments this one, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife [or thy neighbor's husband for that matter], nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's" (Exodus 20:17). Now the actual act of adultery is already forbidden in the Seventh Commandment ("Thou shalt not commit adultery" Exodus 20:14). Thus, the Tenth Commandment does not refer to the sinful actions of adultery, but to the sinful desires that even fall short of the intention and action which lead to adultery. The Hebrew word used here for "covet" literally means desire not intent. It means to take pleasure in another man's wife (or another woman's husband) in your desires, thoughts, and imaginations. This very desire God declares as sinful. Furthermore, consider the words of Paul in Romans 7:7.

Dear ones, be not deceived as we begin our study of the sin of lust. Be quick to acknowledge that the lusts of your sinful heart are wicked and deserve the eternal wrath and condemnation of God as much as if you had intended them with your will or actually fulfilled them with your body. But for the grace of God and the forgiveness of all such sins through faith in Jesus Christ our Savior, we would suffer the torments of hell forever for the lusts of our flesh.

From our text in Proverbs 6:25, let us consider together the two following questions: (1) What Is It You Are Not to Lust? (2) What Are You to Do in Order to Avoid Lust?

## I. What Is It You Are Not to Lust?

A. The subject of the Tenth Commandment in forbidding all coveting, lust, and all immoderate desires is exceedingly broad. The Tenth Commandment forbids all discontentment with your lot in life and requires all contentment with whatever the Lord has brought your way. Ultimately, the Tenth Commandment strikes at the corrupt nature within man from which all sinful desires proceed, and it requires a new nature of righteousness from which all holy desires proceed.

B. Specifically, we are focusing our attention this Lord's Day upon one aspect of lust, namely, that which is directed in a sexual manner toward one to whom you are not married. Here in Proverbs 6:25, we are prohibited by God through Solomon from lusting after one to whom we are not married.

1. For it is one thing to observe and acknowledge that a woman who is not your wife is beautiful or a man who is not your husband is handsome, and another thing to lust after her/him in your heart. What is the difference?

a. I may look at your new car and admire the appearance, the craftsmanship, and the technology of your new car, and that's fine. But when I move beyond mere appreciation of your car and begin to desire your car, imagine myself driving around in your car, or owning your car, I have moved from an appreciation of your car to lusting after your car. Whereas, desiring a model of car like yours may not be sinful (as long as the desire is not excessive and as long as I can wait in God's good time to purchase a car like yours), desiring the very car that belongs to you to the point that I don't care how I get it (even unlawfully), my desire has become a sinful lust for your car.

b. The same is true with people. When you move beyond an acknowledgement of someone's beauty and begin to desire the wife or the husband of another because of his/her beauty, or your desires exceed that which is lawful so that you begin to imagine yourself in intimate situations with that person which is only lawful with one's spouse, you are lusting after that person.

2. This lust for another to whom you are not married may be manifested toward those whom you personally know or toward those whom you do not personally know. How the movie and music industry seeks to cultivate these lustful desires in fans for celebrities they have never met. You can hear it in the emotions and expressions fans use to describe their lust for their stars when they call her a fox, or him a hunk. Lust for one to whom you are not married is viewed as being so harmless by the world in which we live ("Look but do not touch" is really saying "Lust but do not touch"). Children and adults alike begin to lustfully fantasize a life with their favorite sex god or sex goddess. These are not innocent desires, dear ones, but flow from our own evil desires of the flesh.

B. The temptations to promote lust within us come at us from many different directions. It is so important that you recognize the various occasions of lust in your life if you would see some significant victory over lust in your life.

1. From the revealing photos of women in magazines at the counter as you check out of the store to the nearly naked women in bathing suits on the internet sports page. From the explicit pornography in magazines and on videos, movies, and websites to the scantily clad men and women in the Sears catalogue. From billboards along the highway to the explicit sexual phone lines and sexual lyrics in lascivious songs.

2. Dear ones, none of us are invincible to these temptations should we flirt with them. We cannot play with fire without being burnt sooner or later (Proverbs 6:27).

a. I speak not only to members of the congregation, but to ministers and elders as

well (among whom I am included). For how many ministers have been led into adulterous affairs because they did not take heed to the various temptations to lust in their lives, but rather entertained and toyed with those seemingly harmless sinful desires. But that is the nature of lust. It begins with a seeming controllable spark of sinful desire, but so often grows into a mighty forest fire until it destroys countless lives by its uncontrollable flames of passion.

b. How I have heard and read of ministers or salesmen who do much traveling being ensnared by their lust while in the privacy of their hotel room with pornographic movies or magazines. Or while stepping out to eat they give in to their lusts by visiting a strip joint. Dear ones, if David (a man after God's own heart) could fall into an adulterous affair due to lustful desires for Bathsheba, or Solomon (the wisest man upon the earth) could fall into lustful desires for women in multiplying wives and concubines to himself, then are we not all susceptible to falling in the same area?

c. God warns us that we should never proudly say, "That could never happen to me" (1 Corinthians 10:12). God is no respecter of persons: minister, elder, salesman, nurse, or housewife; male or female; young or old. Dear ones, if you sneer at God's commandment against lust, and thus treat the God of your salvation with scorn, and sin against His grace by willfully disobeying Him, you will as certainly be crushed by heartache and woe as the one who sneers at the law of gravity and jumps from a jet without a parachute.

d. Whether your unabated lust issues forth in your behavior or not, it is polluting your thoughts, imaginations, and desires, and is making you unfit to think one pure thought. Once those pornographic images that you have willingly looked upon become implanted into your memory bank, they will flash before your mind's eye without warning. It is so easy to look at pornography, but it is nearly impossible to remove it from your memory. It is harder than trying to remove the scent of a skunk that has sprayed your clothing or your car. It continues to haunt the repentant Christian who has indulged in pornography even after he/she confesses it as sin and seeks the forgiveness of God. You may be free to sow seeds of wicked lust into your mind, but you are not free from reaping the lustful crop that you have sown. God will forgive, but so often you will not forget for a very long time.

C. How often even Christians begin down the road of pornography thinking they will indulge themselves just this one time and then they will be able easily to quit. But the lustful appetite is not so easily quenched by feeding it just once—it wants more and more and more. It is never satisfied until it has destroyed lives and marriages (Proverbs 27:20); until it has reduced one to poverty in every way (Proverbs 6:26). To indulge only once in satisfying lustful desires is one time too many.

D. Before moving on to the last main point, I would pause to ask you some questions upon which to reflect.

1. Are you who are married faithful to your spouse in the way you look and think about other men/women? When you have a problem with your husband/wife, do you ever wish you could be with another man/woman?

2. Are you who are unmarried being faithful to your future spouse (whoever he/she may be) in the way you look and think about men/women? Do you seek to treat those of the opposite gender as brothers and sisters or as lustful toys for your imaginations and desires?

3. When you see an attractive woman or man, do you find yourself not only acknowledging their beauty, but also indulging and gratifying the lusts of your flesh?

4. Do you seek to live a life of integrity in which you endeavor by God's grace to live the same life before your husband and wife as you do when you are?

5. Do you not only know with your mind, but practice with your eyes and ears that God sees all and knows all that you do in private and that nothing escapes His sight? Does it really matter to you

that the Lord Jesus Christ who suffered to put away the sin of lust sees and knows how you fulfill the lusts of your flesh in secret?

6. Do you practice a double standard in which you act as though it is ok to look but not to touch? Dear ones, we may all be very thankful to the Lord that He has restrained us from fulfilling the various sinful desires of our heart, but that is no reason not to see those sinful desires to be sinful and equally deserving of the condemnation of God as the action itself.

7. Do you not only seek to avoid falling into temptations to lust, but are you as conscientious to avoid becoming a temptation or an occasion to lust by what you wear and adorn yourself? For when what you wear draws attention to certain parts of your body that ought to be hidden (either by how tight it fits the body or by actually exposing those parts of the body), you have wittingly or unwittingly become a seducer to your brother or sister in Christ. I would also caution against going to the extreme that some have gone to in believing that modesty would require that every part of one's leg, arm, neck, or hair be covered. For if one was to be absolutely consistent with that view, one would also have to cover one's face and one's eyes as well because according to Solomon here in Proverbs 6:25 it is also the eye or eyelid that may be the occasion of temptation in leading another into lust. However, I do not see the Law of God requiring such a practice as is seen in the strictest sects of Islam. The Word of God calls us to be moderate in our clothing and appearance.

## **II. What Are You to Do in Order to Avoid Lust?**

A. Solomon speaking by inspiration of the Holy Spirit exhorts us in Proverbs 6:25: "neither let her take thee with her eyelids." We are commanded to take action in order to avoid the lusts we have for the beauty of one to whom we are not married. We are commanded by the Lord to do something that we might be rescued from this burning building of lustful desire.

B. What can be done?

1. What must the unbeliever do?

a. The unbeliever must come to Christ confessing his total inability to overcome the sinful desires of his flesh. Whereas he is corrupted and polluted in his very nature by sin, he must look to Christ who was conceived and born with a sinless and perfect nature. He must not only look by faith alone to the righteousness of Christ in keeping the Law of God in all His words and actions, but in keeping the Law of God in His holy nature, in his holy thoughts, desires, and imaginations.

b. The unbeliever must receive by faith alone the Lord Jesus Christ who not only fulfilled the Covenant of Works (which condemned us to hell) on the verbal and behavioral level, but also fulfilled the Covenant of Works on the natural level (i.e. as to our human nature) and affectional level (as to our desires). When he comes to Christ embracing Him by faith alone, the believing sinner is forgiven once and for all for his corrupt nature, his wicked desires and lusts, and his evil words and actions. Then the righteousness of Christ's sinless human nature, the righteousness of Christ's sinless desires, the righteousness of Christ's sinless words and deeds are all imputed/credited to his account in the court of heaven. The believing sinner is then declared righteous by God before the throne of God so that none can lay a charge against one of God's elect who have come to Christ and has been forever justified.

c. If such were not the case, one could never ever escape the just condemnation of God's Law. Because even after we have been regenerated and a new principle of life has been implanted within us by God's sovereign and free grace, our natures continue to be infected by corruption (1 John 1:8 as opposed to 1 John 1:10). The unbeliever must by God's grace not look to any qualifications or righteousness or works or merits in himself, but must see himself completely unqualified, ungodly, and undeserving of the least blessing from God and rather look to Christ alone, to Christ's righteousness alone, and to Christ's free offer of salvation alone as the sinner's only qualification, as the sinner's only righteousness, as the sinner's only merit,

and as the sinner's only hope of eternal salvation (Isaiah 55:1).

2. What must the believer do?

a. The believer must come to Christ as well. He must not come to Christ in order to be justified all over again, but he must come to Christ as his righteousness, as his power, and as his sanctification. Without Christ, you can do nothing. The Lord Jesus did not die simply to secure your justification, but also to secure your sanctification from sin as you gradually grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. The power that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead is the power that He has secured for you, dear struggling Christian, in order to overcome the lusts of your flesh. The holy nature and holy affections which belong to Christ and which were imputed to you at your justification are the blessings which the Spirit applies gradually to you throughout this life in your sanctification. You are, therefore, not dead in the water. You are not defeated or deserted. You are not a victim, but are a victor through Christ who loved you and gave Himself for you. By God's grace, you can significantly over time quench the evil desires of your lusts. This may have been the very sin of which Paul speaks that he himself struggled with in Romans 7:7,15-20,24-25.

b. I would suggest the following practical steps to avoid lust in your life.

(1) Call upon the Lord to help you realizing that it is His power alone and not yours that can overcome the lusts of the flesh.

(2) Pray for Christ to give you a holy hatred for lust and all temptation to lust.

(3) Meditate upon His promises (Hebrews 13:4-5).

(4) Do not place yourself in a continual, never-ending cycle of moment by moment confessing each and every lust of which you are aware to God if the problem becomes very serious. But rather go before God as His adopted child in the morning and evening confessing your lust to Him and seeking His paternal forgiveness. Otherwise, one who has a serious problem with lustful desires may not be doing anything else throughout the whole day but confessing his lust. This becomes so counterproductive in keeping your eye upon your sin rather than upon Christ and His mercies. Take some of the following steps.

(5) When a lustful desire comes, learn to be aware of it, and seek to remove it immediately by replacing it with a holy desire, or a holy word, or a holy deed (to be thankful for all the blessings of God, to pray for those who need Christ, to pray for the ministry of the Church, to write a letter or make a phone call to encourage a brother or sister, to apply your mind to your study or your work, to exercise your body with vigor). In other words, do something by God's grace. Don't be idle.

(6) Avoid known occasions of temptation if at all possible (whether magazine stands, strip joints, internet sights, seductive movies, songs, and books, or staring at seductive, flirtatious people, remove the TV or do not turn it on if it is such a stumbling block). If your eye offends you put it out figuratively by removing yourself from all occasion of temptation that you possibly can (Matthew 5:29; 2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Thessalonians 5:22).

(7) Ask someone you trust to help you be accountable in avoiding all known occasions to lust.

(8) Make a covenant with your eyes before the Lord (Job 31:1).

(9) Never forget that Christ is your righteousness and He is interceding in heaven for you at that very moment that your faith not fail even though you may have fallen time and again into the sin of lustful desire. Do not place yourself back under the Covenant of Works in seeking to overcome lust—you will certainly fail. Look to Christ who has already fulfilled for you all of the demands of God's Law. Cast yourself upon Him and receive by faith the holy affections already purchased for you by Christ. Your faith in Jesus Christ, dear ones, has already overcome those lustful desires.

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