

## Lust

This is the fourth lesson in the series on the “Seven Deadly Sins.”

The sin is LUST.

From the [introduction](#) to the series:

**The Seven Deadly Sins never occur as a formal list in the Bible.**

Briefly the “seven deadly sins” are:

Pride is excessive belief in one's own abilities that interferes with the individual's recognition of the grace of God. It has been called the sin from which all others arise. Pride is also known as Vanity.

Envy is the desire for others' traits, status, abilities, or situation.

Gluttony is an inordinate desire to consume more than that which one requires.

**Lust is an inordinate craving for the pleasures of the body.**

Anger is manifested in the individual who spurns love and opts instead for fury. It is also known as Wrath.

Greed is the desire for material wealth or gain, ignoring the realm of the spiritual. It is also called Avarice or Covetousness.

Sloth is the avoidance of physical or spiritual work.

**Where did the “seven deadly sins” originate?**

According to *Sacred Origins of Profound Things*, by Charles Panati, Greek monastic theologian Evagrius of Pontus first drew up a list of eight offenses and wicked human passions:. They were, in order of increasing seriousness: gluttony, lust, avarice, sadness, anger, acedia, vainglory, and pride. Evagrius saw the escalating severity as representing increasing fixation with the self, with pride as the most egregious of the sins. Acedia (from the Greek "akedia," or "not to care") denoted "spiritual sloth." In the late 6th century, Pope Gregory the Great reduced the list to seven items, folding vainglory into pride, acedia into sadness, and adding envy. His ranking of the Sins' seriousness was based on the degree from which they offended against love. It was, from most serious to least: pride, envy, anger, sadness, avarice, gluttony, and lust. Later theologians, including St. Thomas Aquinas, would contradict the notion that the seriousness of the sins could be ranked in this way. The term "covetousness" has historically been used interchangeably with "avarice" in accounts of the Deadly Sins. In the seventeenth century, the Church replaced the vague sin of "sadness" with sloth.

Lust is an inordinate craving for the pleasures of the body.

## LUST

(5 Hebrew and 5 Greek words are so rendered, viz.: (1) *nephesh*, (2) *sheriruth*, (3) *ta'awah*, (4) *chamadh*, (5) *'awah*; (1) *epithumia*, (2) *hedone*, (3) *epipotheo*, (4) *orexis*, (5) *pathos*): The word both as verb and as substantive has a good and a bad meaning. It probably meant at first a strong desire, a craving, abnormal appetite, not only for physical but for spiritual satisfaction. It has come, however, to be confined in its use almost entirely to the bad sense. Some old translations are not accepted now, the word being used in connections which at present seem almost irreverent. Shades of meaning are learned from an examination of the Hebrew and Greek originals.

**1. The Old Testament Use:** The substantive and verbs are: (1) *Nephesh*, in Ex 15:9 and Ps 78:18 translated "desire"; "My desire shall be satisfied"; "by asking food according to their desire." A strong but not sensual sense. (2) *Sheriruth*, meaning "obstinacy," evil imagination. Yahweh said (Ps 81:12), "I let them go after the stubbornness of their heart," a wilful self-satisfaction. (3) *Ta'awah*, "a delight" "a longing satisfaction," and so it came to mean "sinful pleasure." Translated in Ps 78:30, "that which they desired," intensely longed for, referring to Yahweh's provision of food in the wilderness. Also in Num 11:4 concerning "flesh to eat" it is said the multitude "lusted exceedingly" i.e. "craved eagerly. (4) *Chamadh*, the verb meaning "to delight in," "greatly beloved," "covet," probably for evil purposes. The young man is warned against the evil woman (Prov 6:25): "Lust not after her beauty." Here the bad sense is evident, for in the same connection are used such expressions as "harlot," "adulteress," "evil woman." (5) *'Aawah*, meaning "greatly to desire," long after, with undue emphasis, with evil spirit though not perhaps with impure thought. In Num 11:34 reference is made to a place called *qibhroth ha-ta'wah*, "the graves of lust, where "they buried the people that lusted." Ps 106:14 also refers to the Israelites who "lusted exceedingly." Translated in Deut 12:15,21 "desire of thy soul"; 12:20; 14:26, "thy soul desireth." These Deuteronomy passages evidently mean lust only in the good sense.

**2. The New Testament Use:** As in the Old Testament, so in the New Testament we find both meanings of the word. (1) *Epithumia* is used most frequently, and means a longing for the unlawful, hence, concupiscence, desire, lust. The following references hold the idea, not only of sinful desire known as "fleshly," "worldly," as opposed to "spiritual" "heavenly," "the will of man" as opposed to "the will of God," but also the sensual desire connected with adultery, fornication; verb in Matt 5:28; Mark 4:19; John 8:44; Rom 1:24; 1 Cor 10:6; Gal 5:16-17,24; Titus 2:12; 1 Peter 1:14; 1 John 2:16 f; Jude verses 16,18; Rev 18:14. (2) *Hedone*, delight in sensuality, hence, wicked pleasures; translated in James 4:1,3 "pleasures": "Your pleasures that war in your members"; "Ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures" (the King James Version "lust"). (3) *Epipothéo* means to crave intensely the wrong possession; translated in James 4:5 "long (the King James Version "lusteth") unto envying." (4) *Orexis*, used in Rom 1:27, from context evidently meaning "lust" in the worst sense; translated "lust." (5) *Pathos*, meaning "passion" inordinate affection, with the idea in it of suffering; translated in 1 Thess 4:5 "passion of lust."

**WILLIAM EDWARD RAFFETY**

(from International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Electronic Database Copyright © 1996, 2003, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

## Lust

A strong craving or desire, often of a sexual nature. Though used relatively infrequently (twenty-nine times) in Scripture, a common theme can be seen running through its occurrences. The word is never used in a positive context; rather, it is always seen in a negative light, relating primarily either to a strong desire for sexual immorality or idolatrous worship. In secular literature, the word indicates only a strong desire and can carry either good or bad connotations. The Greek word *epithumia* and the Hebrew words *`awaahh* and *chaamad* can themselves be used in a neutral or good sense (i.e., Matt 13:17). In these instances the New International Version does not translate the word as "lust." Rather, it is translated as "desire," "longing," and the like. The context surrounding the word lends to this translation in such instances. However, in Scripture, as translated in the New International Version, the word is used for a strong desire that is negative and forbidden. Indeed, the unregenerate are governed and controlled by deceitful lusts or desires (Eph 2:3; 4:22; Col 3:5; Titus 2:12).

In the Old Testament, the word is primarily used to describe idolatrous activities, although it does have sexual concerns in at least two instances (Job 31:1; Prov 6:25). In both, the context is negative in meaning and is accompanied by a strong warning of God's impending punishment on those with such a strong, all-encompassing desire for inordinate affections. The lust involved in the realm of idolatry involves Israel's strong desire to be like other nations, who worship their gods of wood and metal. The language of Job is especially potent in regard to sexual immorality. Job is kept from looking "lustfully at a girl" because he knows that God's plan is "ruin for the wicked, disaster for those who do wrong." In the other Old Testament instances, the meaning clearly displays an idolatrous relationship, primarily Israel's desire to be like her surrounding neighbors (cf. Isa 57:5; Jer 13:27; Ezek 6:9; 16:26; 20:24,30; Nah 3:4).

In Num 15:39 Moses is told by God to command that the Israelites wear tassels on the corners of their garments to remind them of the commands of the Lord. This reminder is seen in contradistinction to the outcome of not wearing the tassels, namely, "going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes."

Almost half the occurrences of the word and its derivatives are in the Book of Ezekiel. In every instance, it refers to Israel's idolatrous worship. An interesting display of this attitude is seen in chapter 23, where God's prophet uses the parable of two adulterous sisters, Oholah (representing Samaria) and Oholibah (representing Jerusalem). The imagery involves sexual lust but is descriptive of Israel's spiritual idolatry. Just as Oholah's and Oholibah's love was misdirected toward the officers of enemy armies, so Jerusalem's desire was for the things of her enemies. Throughout the parable, God warns of the judgment that awaits Oholah and Oholibah for their idolatrous lust. Indeed, such judgment occurred for Oholah (Samaria) in 722 B.C., when Assyria conquered her. Oholibah (Jerusalem) fell in 586 B.C.

In the New Testament, the word moves from referring primarily to idolatry to referring instead almost exclusively to sexual immorality. While the idea of idolatry is not completely absent, the primary intention is as a strong, inordinate desire for sexual relations. This sexual immorality, however, is not intended to represent actions alone since lust occurs first as a thought in the mind. The warning is to stop the lust before it moves into the realm of action. For instance, Jesus commands that a man is not to even look at a woman lustfully (i.e., with a desire to have sexual relations with her) because that is the same as committing the physical act of adultery (Matt 5:27-30); both are sin.

In each of the texts where Paul uses the word, it clearly is condemnatory of sexual immorality, both homosexual (Rom 1:26-27) and heterosexual. The command from Paul is to utterly destroy those inordinate desires that most often manifest themselves in the area of sexuality (cf. Col 3:5). Paul continues to warn that we must learn to control our bodies and be sanctified rather than giving in to our base desires, which is characteristic of those who do not know God (cf. 1 Thess 4:3-5).

Paul is not alone in pointing out that the lustful lifestyle is characteristic of lost humanity. Peter concurs, and exhorts his readers to quit living as they did before they received Christ. He points out that lust is evidence of a pagan lifestyle (1 Peter 4:3). Also, according to Peter, lustful desires (not necessarily just sexual desires, but desiring anything more than one desires God) are a basic motivation inherent in human sinful nature (2 Peter 2:18).

It is obvious from John's writings that our lusts do not come from God but from the world. However, we are reminded by John that the world and its desires (lusts) pass away, whereas "the man who does the will of God lives forever" (1 John 2:16-17). Here we see that our lusts are in direct violation of God's perfect will, because they usually are misdirected, moving and leading us away from God to our own selfish desires.

Our lusts have a very powerful influence on our actions if they are not caught and corrected immediately. We must remember that lust occurs in the mind and is not a physical action in and of itself. It does, however, have great potential of becoming an action—indeed a very damaging action. That is why we must heed the admonition of Paul in 2 Cor 10:5: "We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ."

**Daniel L. Akin**

Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology. Copyright 1996 by Baker Books. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Matt 13:16-17

<sup>16</sup> But blessed are your eyes, for they see, and your ears, for they hear. <sup>17</sup> Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.                      ESV

Eph 2:1-3

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— <sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Col 3:5

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Job 31:1

I have made a covenant with my eyes;  
how then could I gaze at a virgin?

Prov 6:25-26

<sup>25</sup> Do not desire her beauty in your heart,  
and do not let her capture you with her eyelashes;  
<sup>26</sup> for the price of a prostitute is only a loaf of bread,  
but a married woman hunts down a precious life.

Matt 5:27-30

<sup>27</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' <sup>28</sup> But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup> If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. <sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Rom 1:26-27

<sup>26</sup> For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; <sup>27</sup> and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

1 John 2:15-17

<sup>15</sup> Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Often I have referred to The Screwtape Letters, by C. S. Lewis.

This book gives an excellent insight into the ways of the devil as he “goes about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.”

1 Peter 5:6-11

<sup>6</sup> Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, <sup>7</sup> casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. <sup>8</sup> Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. <sup>10</sup> And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. <sup>11</sup> To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

ESV

Each chapter is short and deals with some issue of Christian living.

The key to understanding Screwtape is to know that it is written from the perspective of the devil and everything is backwards. E.g. God is the “Enemy,” anything truly good is bad to the devil, a Christian is a “patient,” Wormwood is an imp assigned to corrupt the patient which is a new believer.

Chapter IX is on Lust:

“My Dear Wormwood,

I hope my last letter has convinced you that the trough of dullness or “dryness” through which your patient is going at present will not, of itself, give you his soul, but needs to be properly exploited. What forms the exploitation should take I will now consider.

In the first place, I have always found that the trough periods of the human undulation provide excellent opportunity for all sensual temptations, particularly those of sex. This may surprise you, because, of course, there is more physical energy, therefore more potential appetite, at the Peak periods; but you must remember that the powers of reference are then at their highest. The health, and spirits which you want to use in producing lust can also, alas, be very easily used for work or play or thought or innocuous {harmless} merriment. The attack has a much better chance of success when the man’s whole inner world is drab and cold and empty. And it is also to be noted that the trough sexuality is subtly different in quality from that of the Peak – much less likely to lead to the milk and water phenomenon which the humans call “being in love,” much more easily drawn into perversions, much less contaminated by those generous and imaginative and even spiritual concomitants {attendant, accompanying} which often render human sexuality so disappointing. It is the same with other desires of the flesh. You are much more likely to make your man a sound drunkard by pressing drink on him as an anodyne {to sooth or relieve pain} when he is dull and weary than by encouraging him to use it as a means of merriment among his friends when he is happy and expansive. Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure in its healthy and normal and satisfying form, we are, in a sense, on the Enemy's ground. I know we have won many a soul through pleasure. All the same, it is His invention, not ours. He made the pleasures: all our research so far has not enabled us to produce one. All we can do is to encourage the humans to take the pleasures which our Enemy has produced, at times, or in ways, or in degrees, which He has forbidden. Hence we always try to work away from the natural condition of any pleasure to that in which it is least natural, least redolent {smells good} of its Maker, and least pleasurable. An ever increasing craving for an ever diminishing pleasure is the formula. It is more certain; and it's better style. To get the man's soul and give him nothing in return—that is what really gladdens our Father's heart. And the troughs are the time for beginning the process.

But there is an even better way of exploiting the Trough; I mean through the patient's own thoughts about it. As always, the first step is to keep knowledge out of his mind. Do not let him suspect the law of undulation. Let him assume that the first ardours of his conversion might have been expected to last, and ought to have lasted, forever, and that his present dryness is an equally permanent condition. Having once got this misconception well fixed in his head, you may then proceed in various ways. It all depends on whether your man is of the desponding type who can be tempted to despair, or of the wishful-thinking type who can be assured that all is well. The former type is getting rare among the humans. If your patient should happen to belong to it, everything is easy. You have only got to keep him out of the way of experienced



Christians (an easy task now-a-days), to direct his attention to the appropriate passages in scripture, and then to set him to work on the desperate design of recovering his old feelings by sheer will-power, and the game is ours. If he is of the more hopeful type, your job is to make him acquiesce in the present low temperature of his spirit and gradually become content with it, persuading himself that it is not so low after all. In a week or two you will be making him doubt whether the first days of his Christianity were not, perhaps, a little excessive. Talk to him about "moderation in all things". If you can once get him to the point of thinking that "religion is all very well up to a point", you can feel quite happy about his soul. A moderated religion is as good for us as no religion at all—and more amusing.

Another possibility is that of direct attack on his faith. When you have caused him to assume that the trough is permanent, can you not persuade him that "his religious phase" is just going to die away like all his previous phases? Of course there is no conceivable way of getting by reason from the proposition "I am losing interest in this" to the proposition "This is false". But, as I said before, it is jargon, not reason, you must rely on. The mere word phase will very likely do the trick. I assume that the creature has been through several of them before—they all have—and that he always feels superior and patronising to the ones he has emerged from, not because he has really criticised them but simply because they are in the past. (You keep him well fed on hazy ideas of Progress and Development and the Historical Point of View, I trust, and give him lots of modern Biographies to read? The people in them are always emerging from Phases, aren't they?)

You see the idea? Keep his mind off the plain antithesis between True and False. Nice shadowy expressions—"It was a phase"—"I've been through all that"—and don't forget the blessed word "Adolescent." {young}

*Your affectionate uncle,*  
SCREWTAPE"

The Screwtape Letters, C. S. Lewis, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1976  
Pages 53-56

When the Lord affords me another opportunity to teach on Wednesday Bible Study we will consider the sin of Anger.

Anger is manifested in the individual who spurns love and opts instead for fury. It is also known as Wrath.