

Christian Sexual Purity By James Moriello

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

This teaching is a continuation of our sermon series on the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus continues here with His divine exposition of the second table of the Law. His exposition does two things. First, the Lord gets to the root cause of sinful behavior—the human heart. Second, our Savior raises the bar for God’s people. No mere human being can meet the divine requirement of perfection and enter heaven (Matthew 5:48; Romans 3:10-23). Jesus points out to any who think that they have externally observed all of the commands of the Law that the same commandments must be perfectly observed internally as well. But there is good news! *“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”* (2 Corinthians 5:21). Lust, like anger, is a neutral term. It simply means a strong desire (Greek: epithumia). Jesus used the term of His desire to eat the last Passover of His Incarnation with His disciples (Luke 22:15). However, in the Bible as well as in our day, lust usually implies sinful desire, and it is from that perspective that we will address it. If any of these things makes you uncomfortable, it may be the Holy Spirit working in your heart that you might be more and more conformed to Christ’s image (Hebrews 4:12; Romans 12:1-2). You may have some changes to make. But do not be loaded down with guilt and despair. There is forgiveness of sin based upon the Blood of Jesus (Psalm 51:17; Hebrews 9:22). You can change what you do today and going forward, so do it as the Spirit leads you. By way of introduction, we will mention of the fact that there are many types of sinful lust patterns, and the following three points will specifically address its most well known form—sexual lust. First, lust begins in the heart. Second, lust is progressive. Third, we will look at Scriptural solutions to aid us in guarding our hearts against sinful lusts.

There are many types of lust. Let me explain them in two broad categories. The root cause of the commandment forbidding adultery also comes into play in the tenth: *“You shall not covet...”* (Exodus 20:17). Not only does the Tenth Commandment forbid adultery, but it also forbids desiring anything that God has not given you. Another example is where the Seventh Commandment meets the Second Commandment, which forbids idolatry (Exodus 20:4). Anything that becomes such a controlling desire that God is shut out or relegated to second place is an idol. This could be an addiction (such as food, strong drink, television, or the internet) or an obsession (such as another person), or both. Anything other than God the Holy Spirit that takes control of the life of the Christian is an idol.

Lust begins in the heart. Before it is acted out, it is acted in. Sinful thoughts and desires are held onto, often for selfish reasons. Are we really thinking of others in such a state? Reason and consequences can easily go out the window in a passionate moment. Job had the right idea. The view of the godly patriarch was that if he was unfaithful to his wife even in secret, then may his wife find solace in another man’s arms (Job 31:10). Think about it—this may be a bitter pill to swallow. Consider the statement of Isaiah. *“They conceive evil and bring forth iniquity”* (Isaiah 59:4). Think of a baby. The child is conceived and nine months later is born, and joy is the result. Sin is like that, but the end is not joy but sorrow. *“The way of the unfaithful is hard”* (Proverbs 13:15b).

Lust is progressive. It may start small but it can get real big real fast. Consider David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11). David is in Jerusalem when he should be with his army, and he has too much time on his hands. Then he looks—it always begins with a look. Then the affair happens. Bathsheba becomes pregnant, so David tries to cover up the sin. When he cannot, he sends Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba, off to his death in battle. The cycle of deception goes on and the sins add up. God does not have blinders on however, and He calls out David. David repents and gets back on track, even if for a little while (2 Samuel 12:13; Psalm 51:17). There is always opportunity to halt the progression, but we have to be ready to hear the voice of the Lord and heed the voice of the Lord. In hindsight, David could have stopped it before it started.

Enough conviction! Let us have solutions! I will offer you eight practical solutions based upon the Scriptures:

- 1) **Stay busy.** *“But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord. But He who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife”* (1 Corinthians 7:32-33). Too much idle time leads to sin. If you are single, busy yourself with spiritual things. If you are married, do likewise but do not neglect your spouse.
- 2) **Stop looking.** *“I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman”* (Job 31:1). Sinful lust starts with a look.
- 3) **Flee tempting situations.** *“...that she caught him by his garment, saying, ‘Lie with me.’ But he left his garment in her hand and fled outside”* (Genesis 39:12). Joseph’s master’s wife was trying to seduce him. Joseph did the honorable thing and took himself out of the situation. Do not think you have it all under control. Your sex drive is stronger than you are.
- 4) **Do not sear your conscience.** *“Do not quench the Spirit”* (1 Thessalonians 5:19). God provides Himself to aid you in living a holy life pleasing to Him. Do not kick Him to the curb.
- 5) **Trust in God to supply your needs.** *“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:19). God has a perfect plan for you in your best interest. If you are single, trust the Lord that He will provide a spouse in His time if He wills it to be so. Don’t force your way into a relationship, particularly not one with a non-Christian. That is taking your will back and rejecting God’s will. Not wise.
- 6) **Get married and stay sexually active within the marriage relationship.** *“Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time,*

that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (1 Corinthians 7:2-5). Marriage between one man and one woman is God's perfect plan, and it has not changed because the culture has. Going about from partner to partner cheapens something that was created by God as a sacred covenant back in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:24). Marriages where sex is either absent or used as a tool for manipulation do not honor God, as they give Satan an opportunity to divide what God has brought together.

- 7) **Channel your emotions to your spouse.** *"Drink water from your own cistern...and always be enraptured with her love"* (Proverbs 5:15a, 19c). Lust operating within marriage where agape (God's) love is present is eros in the Greek. Eros refers to sexual love that in the Christian marriage exists as a part of the bond. The grass is not greener elsewhere. Follow this principle and you will have your spouse's respect.
- 8) **Pray with your spouse.** *"For where two or three are gathered together in My Name, I am there in the midst of them"* (Matthew 18:20). This goes for married couples too, not just prayer meetings. It helps your bond grow stronger and deeper.

*We thus conclude our study on this topic. I encourage you to pick up a copy of 'Concerning the Married and the Unmarried' or read it on our website, www.firmfoundationri.com. That teaching covers the related subjects of singleness, sex, marriage, divorce, and remarriage mentioned by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Next week we will look at honesty, oaths, and speech as they relate to the Ninth Commandment which forbids bearing false witness.