

Men of Purity

God has given to most men a strong sex drive. This is nothing to be ashamed of. Our manhood is given to us not only for sexual purposes but also to give us the drive and aggressiveness for leadership and other manly qualities. However this drive has been perverted by the sinful world in which we live and has been used for sinful and immoral purposes. While our virility is nothing to be ashamed of it is to be exercised with constant self-control.

All men, and especially Christian men, should be men of moral purity. We must keep both our minds and our bodies pure. It is not the immoral man, who lacks self-control, who is a real man. A real man is the one who, under the control of the Holy Spirit, denies sinful lusts and remembers that His body was purchased by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and is a temple of the Holy Spirit.

Five Biblical Witnesses

We will look at five Biblical witnesses who command us to refrain from indulging in immoral lusts. The word translated “lust” in the following Scriptures is *epithumia*. It means “a strong desire or longing” [especially for that which is forbidden]. This word is sometimes used in a good sense, but not in any of the places we will be looking at. The kindred verb is *epithumeo* and means “to set the heart upon.” It is obvious that we are talking about some very strong desires here.

The First Witness-Peter

The apostle Peter wrote about these strong desires in 1 Peter 2:11, "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul..." Peter reminds us that this world is not our permanent home. We must live in the light of eternity. We will face the Lord one day. He tells us to abstain from these desires, which in this case are illegitimate ones that stem from our sin nature. The word translated “abstain” is *apechomai* and means to “hold oneself off; refrain; abstain.” We are holding ourselves back from sinful behavior. We are not giving in to these sometimes very strong desires.

Men rarely realize how much they are damaging themselves spiritually when they give in to immoral practices. A man may think that if he does not actually engage in fornication or adultery, that it is not so serious if he looks at women lustfully or looks at pornography. However, Peter says that these practices “war” against our souls. The word for war is *strateuomai* and means “to go to war as a soldier.” When someone is at war with us they are an enemy that is determined to destroy us. We would be foolish or cowardly not to resist this enemy in a very determined way. Our souls, our spiritual strength, our communion with our Lord, are greatly damaged when we indulge in sinful lusts. We must practice self-denial if we would “wax strong in spirit” as John the Baptist did in Luke 1: 80. We cannot indulge in any kind of immorality, even mental immorality and be “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.” (Eph. 3: 16).

In this passage from 1st Peter, the setting is a very hostile environment for those who were true Christians. It was imperative that they be spiritually strong in such a situation.

The Second Witness-John

The apostle John also wrote of this unfriendly environment and reminded us of things we must avoid. He wrote in 1 John 2:15-17, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Here is our word "lust" again. Two of these lusts directly bear on our subject, those of the eyes and of the flesh. This would include pornography and gazing on women in an immoral fashion, as well as the actual commission of overt sins.

We also should not be surprised when we are surrounded with these temptations, because, according to John they are just a part of the world system, which is under the influence of Satan. It seems sometimes as if these sinful attitudes are almost universal. Is it possible to avoid them? Well, they are almost universal. The same apostle wrote in 1 John 5:19, "And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness." Even though this is true it is possible, using the means that our Lord has provided, to avoid them. Our Lord has told us in John 15:19, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." The whole world does indeed lie in wickedness, but in a very real sense, we are not a part of this world.

The Third Witness-James

James, the Lord's brother, also speaks to this subject. He tells us in effect to not let sin get the foot in the door. He wrote in James 1:13-15, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." Here is the word "lust" again. If we do not fight sinful desires when they first enter our minds, they will eventually lead to overt sin, and, if not repented of, to devastating spiritual destruction.

These lusts "entice" us. The word translated "entice" is *deleadzo* and means "to entrap; delude; allure; beguile." Here, Satan makes sin look attractive, while hiding the horrible results. He shows us the luscious bait, while hiding the fatal hook.

The Fourth Witness-Paul

The apostle Paul also weighed in on this subject. He was concerned that his young preacher friend, Timothy, be spiritually strong. He wrote to him in 2 Timothy 2:22, "Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." These are very strong words and provide a picture of tremendous energy exerted in avoiding sin. He tells us to "flee" these lusts. The word for flee is *pheugo*. It means "to run away; escape." When facing a dangerous enemy or a creature like a poisonous snake we run with all our might. We would not dare get on a pornographic web site, for instance. However, part of a good defense is a good offense. We do this simultaneously. While we flee these youthful lusts we also "follow" righteousness, faith, peace and charity. The word for "follow" is *dioko*. It means "to pursue; press forward." We are running just as hard after a strong spiritual life as we are running away from sinful temptations. This obviously means that we are reading and studying the Bible, praying fervently and being attentive to the gospel. We are

also doing all this with “them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” We are not hanging out with people who have the wrong values. We are carefully choosing our friends.

The Fifth Witness-The Lord Jesus

Our Savior gave us some very strong language on this subject. He spoke in Matthew 5:27-30, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."

We must remember that these are the words of the God/Man, the Son of God! We do not believe in salvation by works, but the Lord indicates here that an individual who does not vigorously fight sinful lusts does not manifest eternal life. A born-again child of God will take these words seriously and will fight hard against immoral lusts. The Lord here is not talking about literal mutilation of the body, but the language indicates some very, very strong efforts to avoid sinful lusts.

Four Examples

We have considered five Biblical witnesses. Now let us look at four examples. We will look at three negative examples and one positive example.

Reuben

Reuben was one of Jacob’s twelve sons. He was one of the patriarchs of the children of Israel. He did some very commendable things in his life. He is the one who saved Joseph from being killed by his jealous brothers. However, by a grievous sin of immorality, he disqualified himself from being used of the Lord to the fullest extent. Sadly, when Jacob was blessing his sons near the end of his life, he had to say to Reuben “thou shalt not excel” because of this immoral behavior. (Gen. 49: 4). It was precisely to avoid this disqualification for excelling in God’s service that Paul exercised stringent self-control as he wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

Samson

Samson is another example of a man of God who started out strong but came to a sad end late in his life because he gave in to sinful lusts. He was weak in the area of sexual purity. He indulged in things that were wrong. He allowed the temptress, Delilah, to bring him down. God gave him many warnings, but he ignored them. He mistook God’s long-suffering and thought that he could engage in sin indefinitely. But sadly, payday came and it came at a high price. God finally deserted Samson because of his repeated, unrepented of sin. It is sadly recorded in Judges 16: 20, "... And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him."

David

Our third negative example may be the saddest of all. David was a man after God's own heart. He had done mighty deeds in the service of his Lord even at a very young age. He became King of Israel and was a mighty warrior for the Lord. Yet, he eventually let his guard down. He got spiritually lazy. There was a time when he did not go out to battle with his army. He stayed behind at the palace. As he was there he saw a tempting sight of a very beautiful woman. He did not resist temptation, but committed an abominable act before God. In doing this, he sinned against the woman, against the nation, against his own self, but ultimately he sinned against his God. He made this plain in Psalms 51:4, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest."

David eventually repented of his sin, and God forgave him. However, there were still some terrible consequences. The baby died, and the sword never departed from his own house as his own children sinned against one another and two of his sons tried to take the throne away from him. To see the steps that led to his fall and to his shameful sin see 2 Samuel 11.

Sadly, when sin is not repented of quickly, one sin leads to another. David tried to cover his sin by the cold-blooded murder of Uriah.

Joseph

Thank God we have a positive example. Joseph was a young man away from home. He had been sold into slavery by his own brothers. Instead of feeling sorry for himself, he did the very best he could and was promoted to a position of power. However Satan was lurking for him with a wicked woman. His master's wife tried repeatedly to seduce him to commit immorality with her. She was after him day after day. This must have been a great temptation, but he resisted. She finally tried to force him into a sinful act and he fled. He was put into prison when she falsely accused him, but God eventually used him in a great way. It is very doubtful if the Lord would have used him if he had given in to the temptation. He was able to resist because he had a sense of how terrible this sin would be. He ignored the bait and looked at the hook. He said to the wicked woman in Genesis 39:9, "There is none greater in this house than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his wife: how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

The Much Better Way

Dear brothers, let us, with the help of God, keep ourselves pure. Let us not accept the cheap and deceptive counterfeit of Satan for the true joy of rich fellowship with our Lord. Let us renounce sinful pleasure for the rich treasure of walking with Him as our dearest Friend. Paul was willing to give up everything that stood in his way for this fellowship with Jesus Christ. He wrote in Philippians 3:7-10, "But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death..."

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