

Faith Is the Victory Over the Passion of Lust

(some content adapted from "Battling the Unbelief of Lust" and "You Can Say No to Porn" by John Piper at www.desiringgod.org)

I. Bible definition: *The "passion of lust" is sexual desire that dishonors its object and disregards God.*

Let me show you why that definition is scriptural.

1 Thessalonians 4:1-8 (ESV) ¹Finally, then, brothers,[£] we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to live[£] and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. ²For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. ³For this is the will of God, your sanctification:[£] that you abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴that each one of you know how to control his own body[£] in holiness and honor, ⁵not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. ⁷For God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. ⁸Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

1 Thessalonians 4:4-5 in the *RSV* says,

that each one of you know how to **take a wife for himself** in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like heathen who do not know God.

But the *NIV* says,

that each of you should learn to **control his own body** in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God.

The *NASB* says,

that each of you know how to **possess his own vessel** in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God.

I think the *RSV* captures the meaning most clearly. Here are a few quick reasons why:

1. the parallel in **1 Corinthians 7:2**;
2. the meaning of the word *ktasthai* is "take" or "acquire" not "control" or "possess";
3. "vessel" in connection with "honor" in **1 Peter 3:7** refers to wife;
4. verse 6 "*that no one transgress or wrong his brother in this matter*" makes more sense.

However, the meaning of lust is clear in all of these translations.

Lust Is the Opposite of Holiness and Honor

Notice that verses 4 and 5 say to do something one way but not another way. Take a wife (or control your body/vessel) "in holiness and honor, *not* in the passion of lust." The passion of lust is the opposite of holiness and honor. Sexual desire in itself is good. God made it in the beginning. But it was made to be governed or regulated or guided by two concerns: honor toward the other person and holiness toward God. Lust is what sexual desire becomes when honor and holiness are missing.

Lust Dishonors Its Object

In marriage a man and a woman make a life-long covenant to honor each other with faithfulness and love. Sexual desire becomes the servant of that covenant bond of mutual honor. Therefore, to say to another person, "I want to use your body for my pleasure but not make a life-long

commitment to you” is dishonoring and therefore lustful. Lust is sexual desire minus a commitment to honor the other person.

Lust Disregards God

Verse 5 says to take a wife (or control your body/vessel) “**in holiness** . . . not in the passion of lust like heathen who do not know God.” Holiness has to do with God — being set apart for God.

Knowing God and His will for you keeps sexual desire from becoming lust. **Now look at verse 8:** “Therefore whoever disregards this [the call for holiness], disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.” The root issue in lust is our regard for God. Holiness is living in supreme regard for a holy God. Lust is what sexual desire becomes when we give it free rein in disregard for God.

In summary then, if our sexual desire is not guided by respect for the honor of others, and regard for the holiness of God, it is sinful lust.

“The lusted-after woman or man in your head, or on the screen, or on the street, is dishonored — not treated as a sacred, precious, eternal person made in the image of God.... And the only way this dishonor can be so daringly carried out is by disregarding God while we are in the sway of our lust — disregarding the promises and warnings of having or losing the beauties of Christ. So lust is a sexual desire that dishonors its object and disregards God.” (Piper, “Say No to Porn”)

II. How to Understand Addiction to Pornography

I believe that *addiction* is a relative term. I am aware that there are real physical and psychological effects of addiction, but I believe that no one is absolutely addicted to pornography or any sexual sin - no one. What I mean by this is if the stakes are high enough and sure enough, you will have all the self-control you need to conquer any sexual temptation.

For example, tonight if you are on your laptop and just about to click on a link to view pornography online, and suddenly a black-hooded ISIS member drags your best friend or your spouse into the room with a knife at his throat or her throat and says, “If you look at that website, I will slit this throat,” you will have self-control. You are not addicted. You won’t click.

Or if a man walks into the room and says, “If you look at that nudity, I will not give you the million dollars that I have in this bag, tax-free. But if you do not look at that nudity, I will give you a satchel with one million dollars in cash,” you will have *total* self-control. Yes, you will. You are not addicted. You can control yourself.

Addiction is a relative term. The fact is 99% — I’m just leaving 1% for wild pathological cases that I cannot imagine — *99% of those who give way to lust in pornography, or fornication, or adultery are not decisively controlled by their sexual desire*. They are decisively controlled by what they believe — what they believe will happen if they act on the lust or don’t. That’s what controls them — what they believe — not the sexual desire. The decisive issue is whether we believe the stakes are high enough and sure enough. If we are sure the friend will die a gruesome death, we will have self-control. If we are sure we’ll get the \$1,000,000, we will have self-control. (adapted from “Say No to Porn” J Piper www.desiringgod.org)

That is simply the way we are wired. What we believe to be true motivates and controls our actions.

Our main goal this morning is to show that the fight for sexual purity is the fight of faith; the fight against lust is the battle against unbelief. The same faith that delivers us from hell delivers us from lust. The only fight Christians fight is the fight of faith — the fight to trust so fully in the grace of God — the fight to keep our soul so anchored by the hope of eternal life – the fight to be so satisfied with the glory and holiness of God – that we are highly motivated to present the members of our body to God as instruments of righteousness.

II. The way to fight lust is to feed faith with the knowledge of an irresistibly glorious God.

1 Thessalonians 4:5 – “not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God.”

Not knowing God is the root cause of lust.

Hosea 4:6 (NKJV) **My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.** Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me;

Hosea 6:3, 6 (NKJV) **Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the LORD.** His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, Like the latter *and* former rain to the earth.... **For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.**

2 Corinthians 4:6 (ESV) ⁶For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give **the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**

III. That is why the gospel is not only the power to save, but also the power to conquer the passion of lust. Saving faith is lust-fighting faith.

The gospel is good news about what serious problem?

Colossians 3:5-6 (ESV) ⁵Put to death therefore what is earthly in you:[£] sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶On account of these the wrath of God is coming.[£]

Ephesians 5:5-6 (ESV) ⁵For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. ⁶Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Revelation 6:16-17 (ESV) ¹⁶calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, ¹⁷for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

Hanging over the whole world is the holy, just, irreproachable anger of God at sin and rebellion. His wrath is coming! All thru Colossians and Ephesians Paul reminds us how we have been rescued from God's wrath. A glorious God has provided a way out!

Christ's Atoning Sacrifice for Our Sins

1 Corinthians 15:3 (ESV) ³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that **Christ died for our sins** in accordance with the Scriptures,

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV) ²¹For He made Him who knew no sin **to be sin for us**, that we might

become the righteousness of God in Him.

Colossians 2:13-14 (ESV) ¹³And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having **forgiven** us all our trespasses, ¹⁴by **canceling the record of debt** that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, **nailing it to the cross**.

Colossians 2:15 (ESV) ¹⁵He disarmed the rulers and authorities[£] and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.[£]

This is a reference to the devil and all his spiritual forces of wickedness. How are they disarmed? How are they defeated? Doesn't the devil prowl around like a roaring lion today? Yes, he has many weapons. He can do much damage. But Jesus disarmed him of the one weapon that can condemn us - the weapon of unforgiven sins. Sure, the devil can beat us up and make us feel like losers, but before God he cannot accuse or condemn those who put their faith in Jesus' blood. That weapon is out of his hands. We can confess our sins and be forgiven by the blood of Jesus. Therefore, we will NOT let sin rule over us! We will not present the members of our body to sin! Jesus died for our sins!

Micah 7:8-9 is what you say to your enemy when he scoffs at your defeat.

Micah 7:8-9 (ESV) ⁸Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD will be a light to me. ⁹I will bear the indignation of the LORD because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication.

Listen to these amazing words. This is what victory looks like the morning after failure.

Mark this passage in your Bible. Use it whenever Satan tempts you to throw away your life for the passing pleasures of sin and tells you that's all you're good for.

"Rejoice not over me, O my enemy." You want to gloat over my failure? You think you will draw me into your deception and make me like you?

"When I fall, I shall rise." Yes, I have fallen. And I hate what I have done. I grieve over the dishonor I have brought my king. But hear this, O my enemy, I will rise. I will rise.

"When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me." Yes, I am sitting in darkness. I feel miserable. I feel guilty. I am guilty. But that is not all that is true about me and my God. My God is a sustaining light to me in this very darkness. He will not forsake me.

"I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against him, until he pleads my cause and executes judgment for me." Oh yes, my enemy, this much truth you say, I have sinned. I am bearing the indignation of the Lord. But that is where your truth stops and my theology begins: He will plead my cause. You say he is against me and that I have no future with him because of my failure. That's what Job's friends said. That is a lie. And you are a liar. My God, whose Son's death is my punishment, will plead my cause and execute judgment *for* me. *For* me! *For* me! And not against me.

"He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon his vindication." This misery that I now feel because of my failure, I will bear as long as my dear God ordains. And this I know for sure — God will bring me out to the light, and I will look upon his righteousness, my Lord and my God.

Brothers and sisters, when we learn to deal with the guilt of sexual failure with this kind of brokenhearted *boldness*, this kind of *theology*, this kind of *justification by faith*, this kind of

unshakable faith that you have in the crucified, risen king Jesus Christ — when we learn to deal with the guilt of sexual failure this way, we will fall less often. Because the glory of Christ will become increasingly precious to us.

And best of all, Satan will not be able to destroy our dream of a life of radical obedience to Christ.

1 John 4:4 (ESV) ⁴Little children, you are from God and you have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

Conclusion: Be Warned by Jesus Himself

Revelation 2:18-23 (ESV) ¹⁸“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: ‘The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze. ¹⁹“I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. ²⁰But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants^ε to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. ²¹**I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality.** ²²Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, ²³and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve.

Do you believe God? Do you know God? Are you growing week by week in the knowledge of God’s greatness? Do you meditate on his Word day and night? I call you to make those commitments now for the sake of your own soul and for the glory of God.

Strategies for Fighting Sexual Sin

by John Piper <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/strategies-for-fighting-sexual-sin>

1. Recognize that sexuality is a good gift from God. Genesis 2:24-25 Proverbs 5:18-20 1 Corinthians 7:3-5
2. Recognize that Biblical prohibitions are intended to protect something precious not deny something pleasant. Exodus 20:14 1 Corinthians 6:18 1 Corinthians 7:2 1 Thessalonians 4:3 Deuteronomy 10:12-13
3. Believe God is for you. Psalm 84:11 Romans 8:32 Mark 10:29-30
4. Ponder the eternal danger of lust. Matthew 5:27-29
5. Think often that God has given you even now many good things. Genesis 39:7-9
6. Preach to yourself that there is more joy in God's presence than in sin. Transpose desire. Psalm 4:7 Psalm 16:11 Psalm 73:25-26 1 Peter 2:2
7. Realize that lust disables and weakens our capacity for higher spiritual joys with God. 1 Peter 2:11 Mark 4:19
8. Don't ask, What's wrong with it? Ask: Does it maximize my experience of the power of Christ, my enjoyment of his fellowship, my perception of his beauty, my reflection of his glory? Philippians 3:12
9. Cultivate a passionate devotion to the honor of God's name. 2 Samuel 12:10, 14
10. Develop a worldview that views absolutely everything in relation to God. 1 Corinthians 10:31 Colossians 3:17
11. (For singles) Recognize that sexual relations are not essential to full personhood and happiness. Jesus was single and chaste and fully human. Isaiah 56:3-5
12. (For the married) Recognize that God designed marriage to be a living parable of his commitment to the church. Ephesians 5:21-32
13. Be vigilant over your eyes. Avoid unnecessary stimulation. Job 31:1 Romans 13:14 2 Tim 2:22
14. Look on the opposite sex as eternal persons. Realize that lust inevitably depersonalizes and despiritualizes people. John 5:28-29 Matthew 25:46 2 Corinthians 5:16
15. Think often that Christ suffered agony for your purity. Fight image with image. Christ crying in agony. Titus 2:14 1 Peter 1:18; 2:24 1 Corinthians 5:15 Hebrews 10:29
16. Beware of assuming past successes guarantee future purity. 1 Corinthians 10:12 Galatians 2:13 (Contrasted with Acts 11:24 (Barnabas))
17. Beware of feeling above accountability. 3 John 9 (Diotrephes not submissive)
18. Do not be excessively alone.
19. Get in a group where you exhort one another every day against the deceitfulness of sin. Hebrews 3:12-13
20. Memorize many scriptures. 1 John 2:14 Psalm 1:2 Psalm 119:11
21. Stockpile your thoughts with good things. Philippians 4:8
22. Read the great literature of devotion, biography, etc.
23. Never assume that you are above suffering or that you deserve relief through sin. The pitfall of powerful self-pity. Acts 14:22 Luke 9:58 2 Timothy 2:3 1 Timothy 4:16-17
24. Get busy with some task.
25. Pray at all times in the Spirit for God's deliverance. Matthew 6:13 Luke 22:40 Psalm 119:18
26. Be encouraged; God is patient. Exodus 34:6-7 Nehemiah 9:17