

Staying Pure in a Sexually Confused World

And without faith it is impossible to please God, for he who comes to God must believe that He exists and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6).

We live in a world of chaos—one result of man’s fall from grace, when Adam and Eve chose to rely on their own wisdom and righteousness rather than God’s. They operated in unbelief—giving priority to their desires rather than trusting in God’s promise to provide for all their needs.

In a sense, by eating the forbidden fruit, they revealed a hidden doubt about God’s goodness—a suspicion that He did not have their best interest in mind, and consequently, that He wasn’t perfect in all His ways.

Oswald Chambers once said, “The core of all sin is the doubt that God is good.” When we choose to sin, at some level deep inside, we have concluded that we know better than God, who in our estimation cannot be fully trusted. In that sense, we have declared freedom from all constraint.

When Adam and Eve sinned, the dominion God gave them was seized by Satan, who then became the “god of this world.” Fortunately, Jesus retook this lost dominion by His defeat of Satan on the cross. This lost dominion was retaken by Jesus Christ, God incarnate, who now offers to share it with those who surrender their life to Him as Lord and Savior.

Dominion and authority only work by faith, however. We must truly believe in God’s goodness and as a result, walk in obedience to His sovereign direction. For it was said of the great saints of old that “through faith [they] ... gained what was promised” (Heb. 11:33, NIV).

Where do you get such faith? It is a gift from God to everyone who believes—a gift that must be taken out of the box and used for kingdom purposes! For we are not only saved by faith, but we are sanctified by faith as well.

Lesson No. 1: Without faith in His pure and perfect goodness, it is impossible to please God. It is this faith that overturns the curse and opens the windows of heaven.

The Proper Focus for Obedience

“To know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings” (Phil. 3:10a, BSB).

While praying to His Father, Jesus spoke of the primacy of living from a single focus on God—a focus that naturally increases knowledge, faith, humility, intimacy, love and obedience. (Note: “To know” is to be intimate with, either spiritually or physically).

“This is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent” (John 17:3, MEV).

Since this world is grounded in performance-based righteousness, our instinctive response to being saved is to try to repay God by fashioning a holy life from our own wisdom and power. If we are strong-willed enough, that will work for a while, but eventually it will collapse from lack of divine power.

To make matters worse, instead of keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, we usually focus on the things that tempt us—trying to figure out how to successfully resist them and achieve healing for the brokenness that fuels them.

It's not that there's anything wrong with trying to please God or in seeking help from godly counselors. The problem arises when we place our primary focus and hope for change in man's wisdom instead of putting it in the revealed promises, power,

love and person of God.

When I was saved, I told my new pastor that I was so hopelessly bound by sexual sin and brokenness that it was impossible for me to stop. His reply: "Let Jesus do it for you." It turned out to be the most important lesson of my Christian life.

Newly saved and brimming with passion for Jesus, I'd had a sublime moment of childlike faith and simply believed Him. My life's focus shifted from an examination of the intricacies of my sin to knowing Him in a deep, intimate way. The results were nothing less than miraculous.

In that place of intimacy, little by little, the Holy Spirit began to show me the roots of my vulnerabilities and challenged me to respond appropriately, but this time, by His power. He healed the brokenness behind the strongholds within me and empowered freedom. The result: Despite having been one of the most sexually bound and broken people on the planet, for the last 40 years, I have never returned to sexual promiscuity, pornography or homosexual behavior.

"But we all, seeing the glory of the Lord with unveiled faces, as in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Cor. 3:18).

The Bible teaches that it is God who makes us stand firm in Christ—and it is God who works in us to will and to act according to His purpose as long as we seek Him for it, believe He will and sincerely want Him to (Phil. 2:13).

The psalmist tells us, "I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel ... I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I will not be moved (Ps. 16:7-8).

One night, I was complaining to the Lord about a besetting sin: "Lord, you have set me free from sins far worse than this one. Why don't you set me free from it?" He replied, "Because

you still love it!"

You see, deep within our secret heart, we sometimes harbor a love for one sin or another. That is why a lifestyle of intimacy with God is so critical. He can see what is hidden in our heart and alert us to the problem.

Now knowing what the block was, I began earnestly praying for God to replace my love for the sin with a greater love for Him. In that instance, it was the key to freedom. And so, it is in our weakness and dependence on Him that we are made strong.

Lesson No. 2: We will find no lasting freedom from sin's temporal grip until we learn to continually fix our eyes upon Jesus, turning to Him in faith for power over temptation. Place your focus on God rather than on your sin. The wonder of His felt presence will inspire obedience that will keep you from falling (Jude 24). In short, knowing why you are in bondage to sin helps, but knowing Him heals.

The Proper Motivation for Obedience

As for motivation, it must be love—not duty, guilt, fear or other worldly motivations. Fear of punishment may have been the reason you turned to Christ for salvation, but love for Christ should be your motivation for obeying Him. For it is Christ's love that compels us (2 Cor. 5:14). It is His kindness that leads us to repentance (Rom. 2:4).

According to the promise of Jeremiah 29:11-14, God calls us to pursue Him with all our heart. It is then that He reveals Himself to us.

In essence, freedom from the tyranny of sexual sin and the healing of the brokenness that underlies it is a function of falling in love with Jesus at deeper and deeper levels. Our love emanates from direct experience of His love. We love Him because He first loved us.

When I was wrestling with the idea of surrendering my life to Jesus, I came across that promise in Jeremiah and said to Him, “Deal! I will seek You with all my heart and expect You to reveal Yourself to me.”

Suddenly, a supernatural aperture opened in my chest and an intense surge of “living water” poured into my heart. It was so intense that I knew that if it went on for even a few seconds more, I would die.

But here’s the rub: The raging river felt like liquid love. It was the living water that Jesus had promised (John 4:10, 13-14), and it put me on the floor. It stretched beyond my wildest imagination. God read my heart and gave me precisely what I needed.

When you see Him as He is—when you are dumbstruck by His manifest love and glory—doubt about His goodness takes flight. And when you are tempted by sin, it seems ridiculous in comparison.

In this world, “love” is romance, affection, sexual pleasure and/or the mutual exchange of personal desires. But in God’s economy, love is obedience. It is love that produces the natural fruit of obedience (John 14:15, 24).

It all flows from the love of God poured out on the cross. As Harold St. John once said: “The Cross of Christ means nothing until it takes your breath away.”

Lesson No. 3: Freedom from sin does not come from trying harder! It flows naturally when we seek and experience the revealed love of God, which then enables and motivates us to love in return. God’s “love language” is faithful obedience.

God’s Blueprint for Sexual Expression

Sexual identity and expression were two of the more prominent areas that descended into chaos after the fall. Why? Because

Satan made this area of life one of his main targets. Why? Because sex was designed to be a reflection of the image of God in man. To distort it is to mock God Himself.

One wag has noted: "Sex is not good. Campbell's Soup is good—mmm, mmm, good! Sex is not great. Kellogg's Frosted Flakes are great. Sex is holy! Sex is sacred!"

Sexuality was created by God to symbolize and prefigure the marriage between Christ and the church (Eph. 5:25-32). Any departure from that holy, covenant union is forbidden throughout Scripture.

In combating Satan's distortion of human sexuality, a great weapon in the believer's arsenal is the knowledge of God's purpose for sexual behavior—a purpose that is greater than mere procreation and is inapproachably brilliant in design. It lifts us above legal structures and into a glory realm of faith, wonder and praise. It provides a reason for adhering to God's design, something this world sorely needs.

Since the union of a man and woman in holy matrimony is designed in all its parts to reflect the chaste and faithful relationship God intends to have with man, divorce, adultery, homosexual behavior and every kind of perverse sexual practice are an affront to the very image of God.

And so, it is our unbelief, independence, performance-driven self-righteousness and lack of trust in God's goodness that laid the foundation for the deepening bondage and blindness that envelops us all.

Lesson No. 4: God wants to marry you! As a part of the church, you are the bride of Christ. The parameters He has placed around sexual expression are there to protect the image of God, our eternal marriage with Him in heaven and the revelation of His glory (Rev. 19:7-9).

God's Help in Sexual Temptation

God has made some awesome promises regarding the way of escape from sin.

“His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of Him who has called us by His own glory and excellence, by which He has given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, so that through these things you might become partakers of the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Pet. 1:3-4).

After listing the qualities that can be produced in increasing measure through our participation in His plan, God says in verse 10b: “If you do these things, you will never stumble.” Wow!

The Holy Spirit tells us in Galatians 5:16 that if we live by the Spirit, we will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. Why? Because we have been crucified with Christ. We no longer live, but Christ lives in us (Gal. 2:20). By faith, we must reckon ourselves dead to sin so it will no longer be our master (Rom. 6:11,14).

We must believe these promises with childlike faith. As fallen human beings, our progress may be slow and punctuated by periodic failure, but the promise remains true: God offers forgiveness to those who confess their sins (1 John 1:9). Consequently, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1).

It is His grace that teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and makes us eager to do what is good (Titus 2:11-14).

The Bible teaches that the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace. If the Spirit of God lives in you, it is your choice whether or not to be controlled by the sinful nature or by the Spirit (Rom. 8:6, 9a).

Take heart! The very reason Jesus came was to destroy the power of the enemy (1 John 3:8b). He is by your side, both in victory and in failure. So keep the fire of the Holy Spirit burning. Snakes will not go near fire! God has promised to keep you from falling (Jude 24).

Lesson No. 5: Through the Holy Spirit, God has provided power that, when used, conquers sin and temptation. Indeed, the mercies of the Lord are new every morning (Lam. 3:21-26).

Complete Deliverance From Sexual Sin

Can someone who is trapped in sexual sin find freedom? Can they be healed from their wounds and delivered from the power of the enemy? Absolutely!

In my 40 years of ministry, I have known countless thousands of sexually bound and broken people—homosexuals, transsexuals, sex addicts, fornicators, adulterers and so on—who now live chaste and holy lives.

If we get these foundational issues right, permanent deliverance, freedom and transformation will be ours.

We are no longer who we used to be. Even though our “old man” continually tries to get us to believe in him rather than in the promises of God, our old man is dead. But in Christ, we are a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

“Put off the former way of life in the old nature, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind ... put on the new nature, which was created according to God in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph. 4:22-24).

Practice these things, and you will do well.

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