

When We Need Revival: Addicted to Sin

by Ronald Glass

The sermon emphasizes the need for personal revival and the power of the Spirit of God to overcome addiction and sin, particularly in the area of visual temptation.

Duration: 1:08:48

Scripture: Psalm 119:25, John 8:3-5, Romans 6:7, Romans 6:12-15

Topics: "Revival"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding the dynamics of visual temptation. He explains that our eyes are the most effective door to our soul, and Satan knows this well. He refers to the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden to illustrate how temptation enters through the eyes. The speaker also highlights the need for Christians to understand their spiritual resources and their position in Christ, as this understanding can help overcome constant defeat and patterns of sin. He encourages listeners to study Romans chapter 6 for a deeper understanding of this concept.

Transcript

As you're turning to the 119th Psalm, let me just say a couple of things quickly. First of all, let me just finish the announcement about the superclusters. There is an insert in your bulletin.

There's also a poster on the bulletin board in the back that gives you more information. And we'd love to have some of you come along with us on that if you are so inclined. It's just \$10 a person.

That includes lunch and a good time of fellowship. Secondly, there's also another poster on the back bulletin board. It has to do with a one-man presentation on the life and ministry of John Wesley.

And it's going to be held here on the island on the 19th of September. That's two weeks from last night. If you're interested in that, that is also on the back bulletin board.

Now, there is a matter for very great praise this morning. For those of you who are on our computer prayer list, we presented you on Friday morning, or around noon on Friday, with a very urgent prayer request for a member of the Ballard family. It's a niece of Reva Ballard.

And this was a very serious situation, and it's still a serious situation. But we ask you to pray and pray immediately, especially that God would enable the medical personnel to determine what this virus was that nobody could identify that she was suffering from. She was very near death.

Well, I talked to Vic this morning, and she has turned around. And I believe that's an answer to prayer, because there wasn't much hope for her. And they have apparently identified a retrovirus.

She is apparently being treated for that. Her red blood cells, which were, the count was so low, it was almost off the bottom of the chart. Her red blood cell count is coming back.

Her bone marrow, which they thought was basically gone, is functioning again. And we're just praising the Lord for this. Folks, prayer does work.

And we've seen this in other cases. When God's people come together to pray, God answers. And thank you for praying, and continue to pray for Abby, Reva's niece.

I know she'll appreciate that. All right. Lots of rejoicing this morning.

This morning, however, I want to bring you to Psalm 119, verse 37, in our ongoing series of messages on biblical revival. This verse simply reads this way. Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity, and revive me in your ways.

My friends, the statistics are sobering. We hear from those who try to track these things that nearly 10% of all Americans are sexual addicts. Among Christian men, nearly half regularly view pornography.

And the percentage of women doing so is rising. Why? Well, because it's there everywhere. Pervading the movies, saturating TV, plastered on the magazines at the checkout counter, from the beaches to the box stores to our backyards, our world is screaming its sexual obsession.

Most recently, of course, we have had an epidemic of readily accessible internet pornography, which for many men today has led to extreme, perverse, and even illegal sexual behavior. Christian men and women everywhere are asking the big question, especially in light of our concern for our young people. How do we deal with this epidemic? Where do we find help? Now, I hope that by now your spirit is resonating with the possibility of biblical revival.

Throughout scripture and throughout church history, revival is God's work of breathing new life into his people. As we pointed out to you, it is a sovereign work of God, of the Holy Spirit, as he awakens his sleeping church and brings its members into a renewed vitality. As we've studied this, we have pointed out not only some of the major revivals recorded in the Old Testament, but also we have explained to you some of the great revivals throughout the history of the Christian church, and left you with a challenge to pray for a worldwide awakening in the Church of Jesus Christ.

In words such as Psalm 85, verse 6, O Lord, will you not yourself revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? Or in the words of Jacob, as he wrestled with the angel of the Lord, as he wrestled with God himself, and said, we will not let you go until you bless us. I hope it's with a measure of that earnestness that you continue to pray for revival, here at Wading River Baptist Church, and also throughout the church in America, and in fact around the world. But what I want you to see, and what we started at looking at last time, is that corporate revival, the revival of this church, the revival of churches like ours, the revival of Christianity around our nation, begins with the revival of individual hearts of men and women.

Corporate revival presupposes personal revival. Revival is God's work of renovating the deficient lives of many of his people, individuals just like you and like me. Now we've been exploring this, or we started last

time exploring this, from Psalm 119.

If you know Psalm 119, of course, the longest of all of the chapters in the Bible, and located right in the middle of the Bible, you know that the great theme of the 119th Psalm is the Word of God. But, what a lot of us haven't really realized, is there is an underlying secondary theme that appears throughout this psalm, and it is personal revival. Throughout this psalm, there are pleas, there are prayers that God might revive the psalmist.

And so, today, we are going to continue this exploration of personal revival from this psalm. Today's text is a very convicting one, and one that I think is extremely critical for the day in which we live. Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity, and revive me in your ways.

It is a prayer of revival that is focused on the activity of our eyes. We have a big problem in America today, and a major problem in our churches today, with this addiction to sexual sin. A variety of strategies have been developed over the years for dealing with men and women who are addicted to sin.

Now, there are well-known 12-step programs, and they have these for alcoholics, and drug addicts, and gamblers, and sex addicts. When it comes to sensual sin, there is an increasing number of organizations that are trying to deal with us, with names like the Samson Society, Operation Integrity, Pure Warriors, Pure Desire, Pure Life, and Faithful and True Ministries. All of these endeavoring to help men who are trapped in the grips of pornography and sexual addiction, and try to bring healing to the marriages of men and women, especially in our churches all across America.

Read the stories, it's frightening, of those who are in positions of leadership in churches who are deep into this kind of sin. It should be alarming. As in the case of alcoholism, drug addiction, and gambling, a vigorous debate is going on today as to whether sexual addiction is a disease or whether it's a sin.

Now, one reality that is recognized by secular therapists and Christian counselors alike is this. These addicts, these men primarily, but some women too, who are addicted to sexual matters cannot cure themselves. That is absolutely accurate, and scripture tells us that.

At that point, they agree, in fact, with the very text we've read today, as we'll see in a moment. It's a truth that our psalmist declares in the form of a very passionate prayer. If David was, in fact, the author of this psalm, and we don't know that for sure, but it's a good guess, if David were, we know that he had his problems in this area.

Don't forget the incident with Bathsheba, and don't forget too that David had at least, I think, nine named wives, and more that aren't named, and concubines on top of that. So, David had his own problems in this area. Now, I want to be very clear as I begin my exposition of this passage today, especially as I speak to you men.

I am not in a scolding mood today, believe me. That is not my purpose. I'm not judging you.

I am only asking you to do some deep thinking. Judgment is the Lord's business, but I want this sermon to be a heart-to-heart exhortation, and I speak to myself as well as speaking to you. The addiction of many men and some women to sensuality and pornography is one of the most insidious but silent killers of the spiritual life and testimony of evangelical Christianity today.

It is one of the reasons we are in desperate need of revival. Now, I want you to see today that there are two ways of living that are presupposed by this verse. There are two ways of living, and I want to give you these two ways and then talk a little bit about them and how this impacts the matter of the sins of our eyes.

All right, let's begin then with the first way, and that is our way. Ladies and gentlemen, our way, according to this verse, is the way of vanity. Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity.

Let me give you a very literal or sort of paraphrase of this. The psalmist says, make my eyes pass by. In other words, make my eyes overlook or avert my attention from worthlessness.

That's the meaning of vanity, worthlessness. That which is worthless, especially before God. Now, we should not be surprised by this request when we remember that in 1 John 2, verse 16, we are told that all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust, that is, the desire of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life is not of God.

It is obviously of the world, and it is therefore sinful. Now, there are three things I want you to think about with regard to our way, this way of vanity. Really, three urgent obligations that we have, really, or demands.

And the first is this, we need to understand the dynamics of visual temptation. Now, let me put it this way to you. Your eyes are the most effective door to your soul.

Anybody wants to get into your soul, they open the door of the eyes. And Satan knows this very well. Come back with me a moment to the third chapter of Genesis, to the Garden of Eden, and to the fall of the first couple.

Listen to how it happened. Genesis chapter 3, verse 1, Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, Indeed has God said, You shall not eat from any tree of the garden.

The woman said to the serpent, From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat, but from the fruit of the garden which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, You shall not eat from it, or touch it, or you will die. The serpent said to the woman, You surely will not die. For God knows that in the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

See, a desire is immediately connected to the eyes here. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate, and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Now what was Satan's strategy here? Satan's strategy is very, very subtle, but it is very important because it hasn't changed from that day to this day.

Here's the strategy. The first thing he did was to cast doubt on God's word. He cast doubt on the revealed commandments of God, the will of God.

God said, Don't eat of the tree. And Satan questioned God's revelation. Oh, Eve had it down when he said that.

She says, Well, no, we're not supposed to eat. In fact, we're not even supposed to touch the fruit from that tree. Then, having cast doubt, he directly defies, denies the word of God.

You will surely not die. God is lying to you. Now that is what Satan continues to do today in the lives of men and women, including some of us Christians.

Satan attacks us at the point of our confidence in the word of God. When he wants us to sin, he has to rip down the fortress of sacred scripture in our lives. And he has different ways of doing that.

He can cast doubt upon it. He can directly refute it and lie about it. Satan is presenting us today with a whole pile of lies that contradict the word of God.

Now, here's the second step. Once Satan has dismantled your confidence in the word of God, once you have allowed doubt to come in, then what does he do? He comes in through the door of the eyes. Once your mind has now turned loose of God's commandments, once you're willing to doubt or to deny the word of God, now Satan comes at you with things that attack your eyes.

He comes through the eye door to present you with something that will create desire in your life, a desire which will result in disobedience to the word of God. So the fatal temptation comes through the lust of the eyes. The eyes feed the will, which then chooses to act contrary to the word of God and the will of God.

Here's the way James puts it in the first chapter of his epistle, James chapter 1, in verse 14. Each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. You are attracted, you are enticed by your desires.

Where did that desire come from? Through the eyes. Why? Because Satan thinks that he can get you there because now you've lost confidence in the word. When lust, that is when your desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin.

And when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. And that is Satan's objective. That's why James adds in the next verse, Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

So you need to understand the dynamics of visual temptation. First, Satan will come causing doubt in your heart with regard to the word of God. And when he does, then he will assault you and it may be at an unexpected moment, at a point that you would never anticipate.

Satan will suddenly present something in front of your eyes that will generate desire, which then will cause you to fall. That's why what you see is such a big deal. That's why I don't buy for a minute, especially men who say, Well, I can look at that stuff on television.

I can look at those things in the movies. It doesn't bother me. Well, you see right there, that statement, It doesn't bother me.

It doesn't affect me. Right there is a denial of the word of God. And you have to be very careful lest you buy into the lie.

Because the next thing that's coming is the temptation. So you understand the dynamics of visual temptation. Secondly, we need to understand the dangers of visual temptation.

Now, what is that danger? First of all, let me mention this. The lust of the eyes leads to serious sin. Yes, I know that that is not a popular word in our culture today, and even in many churches, including those claiming to be evangelicals.

But God says it's sin. Galatians chapter 5 verse 19. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident.

Now look at the ones that he names first in this list. Immorality, impurity, sensuality. The first three sins that he mentions all basically have to do with sexual sin.

This, he says, are the deeds of the flesh. Now he goes on to name some other things as well. But those are the ones he begins with.

I also want you to think about something that Jesus said in his Sermon on the Mount. Matthew chapter 5 and verse 27. As you know, in the Sermon on the Mount, in the fifth chapter, the Lord Jesus deals with some of the Ten Commandments and the contemporary perversions at the hands of the Pharisees.

He says in verse 27, You have heard that it was said you shall not commit adultery, but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. What he's saying is you can even sin with your eyes. You've already committed adultery, which is one of those works of the flesh, Galatians chapter 5 verse 19.

Now what I'm saying here is that we must call every form of sensuality and sexual lust what it is. This is what we want to avoid, men. We want to say it's not necessarily sin.

Yes, it is. It's sin. The other thing I would point out to you here is that the lust of the eyes leads to disastrous consequences.

You say, I can handle it. I can cope with it. Well, again, let me say to you, no you can't.

Let me go back to Galatians 5 again. The deeds of the flesh are evident. Immorality, impurity, sensuality.

Now we jump down to chapter 5 verse 21, the last part of the verse. He says, I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. A similar statement is made by Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, where we read in verses 9 and 10, Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived, neither fornicators.

That's those who, frankly, the word refers to prostitution. Nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. In other words, what I'm saying here is that Scripture tells us that the lust of the eyes involves us in sin.

God calls it sin. The consistent practice of sin is a clear indication that you are not in Christ, that you are not a believer. That's what these verses are telling us.

If you are a consistent practitioner of sexual sin, whatever that sexual sin is, you have reason to question whether you have a relationship with Jesus Christ, a personal saving relationship with Christ. My brethren, today this is a non-negotiable. We can't argue with Scripture at this point.

You can try to evade it all you want. But the dangers of visual temptation is that if it is not dealt with, it leads to hell. That's the problem.

And so you need to handle this problem in your life. If you are a professing Christian today, and you know that you are in Christ, and you're wrestling with this sin, I'm going to talk about that in a moment. But you must realize the seriousness of this.

This is sin. So understand the dynamics of visual temptation. Understand the dangers of visual temptation.

Thirdly, understand the defeat of visual temptation. Let's go back to our text. What does the psalmist pray? Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity.

Make my eyes overlook this worthlessness. Now we need to realize, as in every other part of the Christian life, this is not something that we can do alone. If it were, the psalmist probably would not be praying this way.

You, Lord, You, turn my eyes away from looking at vanity. Implied behind that statement is this. I can't do this on my own.

And in a world such as we live in today, where the sensuality is so pervasive, it is in front of us all of the time. You can't, especially in the warmer weather, you can't walk through the grocery store, you can't go to the post office, you can't go to Wal-Mart or the mall or any place without being confronted with this stuff. It is everywhere.

And it's not just in advertising. I'm talking about women walking through the stores dressed in such ways that frankly can't avoid being a temptation to men. It is a very serious matter.

That's why, because it is so pervasive, men, our prayer needs to be, turn away my eyes from looking at vanity. We must realize that as with the rest of our Christian life, we are powerless without the Spirit of God working in us, and especially if there's an addiction. If you have come to a point of addiction, and you need to be able to recognize that.

That's one of the great needs, great necessities with men who are dealing with this sin, is that you may be addicted but not willing to admit that. Now maybe you're not addicted, but maybe you dabble. But you're in danger of becoming addicted.

And those who are addicted very often don't want to admit that they're addicted. But again, this is why we need personal revival. If the Church of Jesus Christ is ever going to have power again, it must be through, in large measure, repentance from this sin of saturating our minds with the filth and the immorality of the world.

And this is only something God can do. Thus, our way is a way of vanity, a way of worthlessness. And if we are to follow God's way, then we need personal revival.

Now that brings me to the second way of living. I've talked about our way. Let's now talk about God's way.

If our way is the way of vanity, God's way is the way of victory. Now in verse 25, that we looked at last week, let me go back there for a moment. My soul cleaves to the dust, revive me according to your word.

In verse 25, the psalmist asks for revival according to God's word, according to the scriptures. Now, however, he moves forward another step and he pleads for revival in God's ways. There is a way to live, and there is a way not to live, if we are to be men and women of God.

And when it comes to the eyes, what are God's ways? I want to suggest three today. Men, I want you to listen very carefully to me, ladies too, but especially men, I want you to listen very carefully to me as we go through these things, because I think there is help here for us, especially if you are having a serious problem with sexual temptation and even addiction. First of all, reject the temptation of your eyes.

You need to understand that a Christian's responsibility is to see sexual temptation as God sees it. We've already pointed out to you that it is sin. But let me go back to the New Testament again, Ephesians chapter 5 and verse 3. Now, listen to what Paul says here very, very bluntly.

But, immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you as is proper among saints. It is not proper for Christians to be involved in immorality or impurity. Listen to Paul again as he says it in Colossians chapter 3 verse 5. Therefore, consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

That's an interesting statement because essentially what he's telling us here is that sensuality, sexual sin, which he describes with several terms, is also considered by God idolatry. Well, sure, it becomes an all-consuming passion and it crowds God out. It is putting sensuality on the throne of our lives and dethroning God.

So it becomes an idol to us. For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience. And in them, you also once walked before you were saved, before you were a Christian, before when you were living in the pagan world, this all was common.

You did this. This is the way you lived. But now, you also put them all aside.

You're not to live like you did before. Now, that's pretty blunt. That's pretty obvious.

But for many men today, that's pretty hard. How do you do it? Well, let me suggest for one thing. I'm going to make a couple of suggestions here, but here's one.

Your attitude and your daily prayer should be that of the Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6, verse 13. Do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil or from the evil one. Men, if you're wrestling with this issue today, and maybe you women too.

You say, well, women, they're not so. Yeah, but listen. There are women who are addicted to the soap operas, the daytime soap operas.

It used to be, now they've got them primetime as well, who have to watch those desperate wives from wherever they are, and that kind of stuff, and feeding their minds with what is really pornography. So, whether you're a man or a woman here today, if you're having a problem in this area, you need to pray this way every day. You get up and you say, Lord, today, this day, do not lead me into temptation.

Lord, don't let the enemy put me in a position of compromise or testing. Deliver me from sin. Deliver me from the evil one, from Satan himself.

Now, when it comes to sensual sin, I want to suggest that you can be even more specific. Here's the way you can pray. Lord, make me see these images, which the psalmist calls worthless.

Make me see these images as you see them. The commercials, the billboards, the posters, the stuff on television, the stuff you see in the newspaper. Lord, make me see these images not as alluring, not as stimulating, as exciting, as something that creates desire.

Lord, make me see them as you see them. Filthy, disgusting, repulsive, nauseating, and exploitative. That's how you ought to be looking at these things.

What it means is that we have to ask God to change our vision, to actually put new glasses on our face so that every time we see this stuff, we're not seeing something beautiful, sensual, and alluring. We are seeing something disgusting, and filthy, and nauseating. Now, one of the things that once in a while is said is that, wait a minute, the New Testament never really talks much about, it doesn't talk about pornography.

Pornography isn't a sin. You can't prove that from Scripture. Yes, you can, and here's how you can do it.

Because Scripture talks frequently about prostitution. The very word often translated, sexual immorality, in the New Testament, in our version of the New Testament, is actually a word that has to do with pornography. I mean, it's actually a word that has to do with prostitution.

The word pornos in the Greek, or pornea in the Greek language, had to do with prostitution. You say, I'm not guilty of that. I don't deal with prostitutes.

Wait a minute. Remember this. Every woman who has been photographed in a sensual way, that you see, whether in a magazine, television, movies, wherever you see it, that woman has been paid for doing that.

And that's the heart of prostitution. She's been paid to stimulate your desires. Perhaps to sell you something, but that's the whole point.

And that's why, if you are guilty of pornography, of using pornography, you're guilty of prostitution in the eyes of God. Now, everywhere in Scripture, that's condemned. That's condemned in the strongest terms.

And so, reject the temptation of your eyes. Men, I encourage you to pray every day, Lord, make me see this stuff the way you see it. Turn my eyes away from looking at this filth.

Secondly, remove the temptation from your eyes. You can remove many of the sources of the temptation that assault your eyes on a day-to-day basis. There's an interesting passage of Scripture at this point, and I would invite you to come and look at it with me.

It's from the book of Job. Go back to Job chapter 31. Job, as you remember, towards the end of the book, in his final appeal to God, really makes a very strong point to God.

He's asking God, show me why I'm suffering this way. What have I done to deserve this? That's really the thrust of his argument. Lord, I'm suffering all of this, but I've never deserved this.

Here's his personal defense. Now, this is part of it. We break into the middle of it.

Chapter 31, verse 1. I have made a covenant with my eyes. How then could I gaze at a virgin? I have made a covenant. I've made an agreement.

A binding agreement with my eyes. Clearly, he's talking about sensuality or sexual sin here. Otherwise, how could I gaze at a virgin? I can't look at another woman.

Why? I can't look at another woman other than my wife because I've made a promise to my eyes. Now, read on. And what is the portion of God from above, or the heritage of the Almighty from on high? Is it not calamity to the unjust and disaster to those who work iniquity? In other words, I would understand this if I were suffering this way because I had sinned.

But, verse 4, does He not see my ways and number all my steps? If I've walked with falsehood and my foot has hastened after deceit, let Him weigh me with the accurate scales. And let God know my integrity. I have done what is right.

If I were sinning, then let God go ahead and judge me. If my step has turned away from the way, now notice verse 7, or my heart followed my eyes, or if any spot has stuck to my hands, let me sow and another eat. Let my crops be uprooted.

Now notice verse 9. If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or I have lurked at my neighbor's doorway for the purpose of adultery, may my wife grind for another and let others kneel down over her. In other words, He's actually saying, let someone go ahead and commit adultery with my wife, or rape my wife, if I have committed this sin. For that would be a lustful crime.

Moreover, it would be an iniquity punishable by judges. For it would be a fire that consumes to Abaddon, that's the Old Testament reference to hell, and would uproot all my increase. Job's saying, I made a promise.

I made a covenant with my eyes. And he is so firm, in spite of all that he suffered, he is so firm in his commitment, that he's willing to allow his wife to be abused, if he breaks that covenant. And it's possible you can make a covenant with your eyes.

You can do what Job did. You can say, I am going to make a promise to God that I will not do this. That I will stay away from this sin.

Now, if you make that covenant, if you decide you are going to make that promise, then in the second place, you need to honor the covenant of your eyes. Psalm 101. For a moment, look at the 101st Psalm.

Listen to these words. David says, I will give heed to the blameless way. When will you come to me? Lord, this is just another way of saying, I need your help.

I can't do this on my own. I will walk within my house in the integrity of my heart. I will set no worthless thing before my eyes.

Here's that same word again. Worthless. I will set no worthless thing before my eyes.

I hate the work of those who fall away. It shall not fasten its grip on me. See, that's the danger with moral sin, with pornography and all of that that comes through the eyes.

It fastens its grip on us. That's why you have so much addiction. A perverse heart shall depart from me.

I will know no evil. That's a very strong commitment on the part of David. Men and women, if we are trapped in this sin, we need also to make this commitment.

It's a matter of a decision. It's a matter of saying, this is what I'm going to do. I have been guilty.

I have fallen in sin in this, and I perhaps have fallen repeatedly in sin. Today, I am making a promise to myself and with my eyes a covenant that I will not live this way any longer. How are you going to do that? Well, I'm going to talk about that, but let me give you one suggestion right now.

Let's go back to Matthew 5, where Jesus mentioned the problem of adultery and just lusting. Let me show you what He says in verses 29 and 30 of Matthew 5. If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you. For it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you. For it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. Rather extreme, right? Yes, it is.

Are we supposed to cut off parts of our body? Or tear our eye out or cut our hand off? No, not literally. Jesus is not teaching that. What He is using is a figure of speech.

It's called hyperbole. It's overstating the case for impact. And what He's simply saying is that whatever causes you to sin, you need to get rid of.

So what does this mean in terms of your life, brothers and sisters? Well, it may mean that you have to eliminate the newspaper out of your house. It may mean that there are magazines that need to go. Subscriptions need to be cancelled.

It may mean that the television has to go. That's probably the biggest offender in many of our homes. Or, perhaps today, it's the computer.

And maybe the internet has to go. It may mean that there are places that you can no longer go. Places that you have to avoid.

Because you know that if you go there, there's going to be temptation. It may be that there are some people that you can no longer hang around. Because if you do, you will be confronted by the temptation.

Now let me just say, parenthetically here, that you ladies have a role to play in this too. Since you can be a source of temptation without even realizing it. The way you dress.

You may not even think about it. You may be very innocent. If someone were to confront you over it, you would be shocked.

You realize that what you have been is a stumbling block to men. You need to be very careful about how much flesh you reveal in terms of your dress. Very important.

Now these are things that you can do. These are things, men and women, that would conform to what Jesus is saying here. Tearing your right eye out or cutting your right hand off.

It is getting rid of the things that cause temptation. So first, reject the temptation of your eyes. Secondly, remove the temptation from your eyes as much as possible.

And then thirdly, resist the temptation before your eyes. Now the fact is that you may not be able to avoid all temptations. In fact, I should put it bluntly, you can't avoid all temptations.

But when you are faced with temptations, what steps should you take to handle it? Now here is where we come to the real nitty-gritty. This is the real answer, men. Let me give you two things.

First of all, understand your spiritual resources. Many Christian men and women, too, find themselves falling again and again and again. And their lives are a frustrating pattern of confess sin.

Confess sin. Confess sin. Their lives are a pattern of constant defeat.

Now why is that? The more I thought about this, not only in this area of sexual sin, but all of sin, the more I am coming to a realization that the heart of our need is to understand our position in Christ. If you are a Christian, you have been united to Jesus Christ in his death and in his resurrection. Let me take you back again to that great passage, the central passage in all of the Bible on this, Romans chapter 6. This is a chapter, and I commend this chapter to you if you are wrestling with temptation today.

I commend it to you. Read Romans chapter 6 at least once a day, every day, until the point of this really gets a hold of you. And its truth grips your heart.

You have been united to Christ in his death and his resurrection. You have, as a result, been freed from bondage to sin as the controlling principle in your life. Sin is no longer your master, and you don't have to sin.

Now let's read a little bit, Romans chapter 6, verse 5. If we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, which you demonstrated visibly, by the way, when you were baptized, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection, knowing this, that our old self, the old corrupt nature, was crucified with him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with. Do you see that? So that we would no longer be slaves to sin, for he who has died is freed from sin. And if you're wrestling with the kind of sin we're talking about, the sins of sensuality, the sins that come through the eyes, you may be saying, wait a minute, that verse doesn't resonate with me.

I don't feel that way. I don't seem to have any freedom whatsoever. Are you going to deny what God has said in his word? This is the truth, men.

This is the truth, ladies. We don't have to be slaves to sin any longer. He who has died is freed from sin.

Jump down to verse 12. Therefore, because of this, on the basis of this, do not let sin reign in your mortal body, so that you obey its lusts. Wait a minute.

Wait a minute, you say. Verse 7 says we're freed from sin. Now in verse 12 he's telling us, don't let it reign in your mortal body.

That's right. Let's go on. Verse 13, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we're not under law, but under grace? May it never be. Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death or of obedience resulting in righteousness? But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.

I'm speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in further lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness resulting in sanctification. Verse 22, but now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit resulting in sanctification and the outcome eternal life.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. What's Paul saying here? Can I say it very simply to you? You and I as Christians have the ability consistently to choose what is right. You and I are no longer under sins controlling tyranny.

Therefore, when you say I can't help it, you're wrong. If you are a Christian, if you are a believer in Jesus Christ, if he has saved you and washed you from your sins in his blood, and if the Holy Spirit is living within you, then you are free. You have been released from bondage to sin.

It cannot hold tyranny over you any longer. Now, this is a matter of faith. And what I mean by this is that you must believe that this is true.

You're saying, wait a minute, it's not true in my life. How do you know it's not true? Well, because I do this and I do that. See, the problem is you're basing your understanding on your experience.

Don't do that. Base your understanding of truth on God's Word. You are no longer legally under sins controlling tyranny, but, and that was the point of verse 12 and following, you are liable to sin's influence.

You're not perfect yet. You're not impervious to sin. God has not built a fortified wall around you that will prevent all sin, all temptation from assaulting you.

No, you are going to be tempted. And you have the ability to sin. You can, if you so choose, be influenced by sin.

And therefore, it's a matter of decision. It's a matter of faith and decision. Understand your spiritual resources.

Men, I firmly believe this. I have proven this in my own life in situations. And that is that you can rely upon the Lord Jesus Christ to give you victory over sin.

Yes, you can. He will do it. Why? Because you are united.

You are one with Him. This passage says that when Jesus Christ died on that cross, you died with Him. When He rose from the dead, you rose with Him.

You were buried in the likeness of His death. Buried, the old sin, buried. You were raised with Him to walk in newness of life.

That's a matter of biblical revelation. That's truth. And you and I can live on the strength of that truth.

But let me just say that when that temptation comes, because you are liable to temptation, you are still liable to be influenced by sin, then there's something you need to do, and that is control the physical circumstances. A commentator that I was reading this week pointed out something to me that I'd never thought about before, but boy, is this powerful. Come back with me to John chapter 8. John chapter 8, verse 1. And Jesus went to the Mount of Olives early in the morning.

He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him. And He sat down and began to teach them. And the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, having set her in the center of the court.

And they said to Him, Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery in the very act. Knowing the law of Moses, who commanded us to stone such women, what then do you say? And they were saying this, testing Him so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down with His finger and wrote on the ground.

And when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up and said to them, He who is without sin among you, let Him be the first to throw a stone at her. And He stooped down again and wrote on the ground. And when they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone.

And the woman, where she was in the center of the court, straightening up, Jesus said to her, Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you? She said, No one, Lord. And Jesus said, I do not condemn you either. Go.

From now on, sin no more. Do you understand the situation? Jesus is sitting there teaching in the temple when they dragged this woman in. And they literally dragged her in.

The religious officials, I won't go into all the details, but it appears that this was a setup. This woman had been set up and they caught her in the very act of adultery and they dragged her out of wherever she was and dragged her to the temple and threw her in front of Jesus. Now, you think about that.

I don't imagine this woman was dressed hardly at all. Probably had something thrown around her and dragged in front of Jesus. Now, that's very subtle, but think about that.

They're not only asking Jesus whether he would stone her or not, but this, remember, Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are. Here's a woman, probably not looking very decent, who has been caught in an adulterous act in front of the Lord Jesus. I've read this over and over again and never thought about it, but when they brought this woman in, Jesus stooped down and he started writing with his finger in the ground.

Now, if he's writing with the finger in the ground, where are his eyes? Why did Jesus do this? This commentator I was reading made a very, very telling point. I think he's right on target. Jesus turned his eyes away from this woman because in his human flesh, he was liable to temptation.

And he has set an example for us. When they kept pestering him, he finally stood up, and who did he look at? The Pharisees. He talked to them.

When he said what he said to them, he stooped down and started writing again. Once they were all gone, Jesus had to say something to the woman. And so he does.

He gets up, I imagine he looked her right in the eyes and nowhere else, and he said, has anybody condemned you? No, no, nobody's condemned me. What's that next word? He sent her away. Our Lord parted company with this woman as quickly as possible.

No lingering visit. No saying, come over here and sit down with me and let me talk to you about your sins. He says simply, you go and don't sin anymore.

Man, that's what you have to do. You have to control the physical circumstances. Understanding your position in Christ, you have to understand that when you are placed in a situation of temptation, number one, don't look.

Number two, get away as quick as possible. Put that into your mental file. Go home and I want you to take it out and think about it.

Hey, I need to do that. You and I all, we all need to do that. I have focused on sexual sin today.

That's a sin which has become an addiction for many. I've done that because this text speaks specifically of sins of the eyes. But what I have said applies to any sinful addiction.

Drinking, smoking, gambling, drugs, materialism, impulsive shopping, whatever it is, God's word declares that in Christ we are free. We do not have to be addicted to sin. Now, I have no doubt that if our text became a persistent and urgent prayer request of men and women across America today, that we would see a sweeping spiritual awakening.

Our churches are full of moral filth. It's a terrible thing to say, but men and women, it's reality and we have to own up to it. But my ultimate concern here is not for the churches of America.

It's for Wading River Baptist Church. Victory in just this one area of sexual addiction, if it were to take place in churches all around our nation, would awaken evangelical Christianity. It would revolutionize.

Victory in just this one area of sexual obsession or addiction, I believe, would revolutionize. This victory is a matter of faith. Let me explain it to you this way.

It is submission to the word of God. By faith, we choose to believe it. But then, victory is also a matter of obedience.

It is submission to the ways of God or the will of God. By faith, we choose to obey it. Do you see? Let me summarize it this way.

Spiritual victory is not a matter of how much Bible you know. And it is not a matter of how you feel about it. It is a matter of choice.

A matter of obedience. Your prayer needs to be something like these lines from an old hymn. Take my will and make it thine.

It shall be no longer mine. Take my heart. It is thine own.

It shall be thy royal throne. Or as we were singing a while ago, Change my heart, oh God. May I be like you.

Hide me in your holiness. We hear a lot today about accountability. In fact, that's become kind of the technique, I guess, to deal with a lot of these sins.

It's not unusual for a man who has been willing to admit his addiction in this area to be involved with a personal accountability partner. Sometimes there are accountability programs that you can put on your computer. Covenant Eyes is one.

Be Safe is another. There are different ones that you can do. Some men get involved in weekly group meetings where they sit around with other men who have the same struggles and they talk about it.

Or they get involved in professional therapy, which can be everything from psychiatrists to psychologists to counselors or even inpatient treatments. Some seek solutions through behavioral psychology. The

problem is when you look at all of these techniques that are used to deal with these things today, the failure rate for every one of these therapies is tragically high.

As someone once remarked with regard to accountability, the whole accountability structure makes men even worse liars. And the thing that I find interesting is that while many Christians today are saying the answer is to be found in accountability, I don't find any scripture that says anything about that. Accountability isn't the answer.

What is the answer? Here it is. Appropriating our victory over sin through our union with Christ. That's the answer.

That's the Bible's answer. Now that requires repentance, prayer, faith, obedience. Those aren't really hard concepts.

They may be hard to do, but they're not hard to understand. Repentance, saying, I'm tired of this, I'm through with this sin. Faith, saying, I believe what God says.

In his word, I have victory. Prayer, Lord, turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things and revive me in your ways. Do not lead me into testing or temptation.

Deliver me from evil and the evil one. And then obedience. Just sheer exercise of will that says, I will obey.

And when you do that, Spirit of God, God, they come right behind you and they give you the power to live the overcoming life. That's why the Apostle Paul can sum up that whole section in Romans at the end of chapter eight by saying that we are, as he puts it, hyper-overcomers. We overwhelmingly conquer.

We're hyper-conquerors in Christ. So what is our responsibility? Here it is, 2 Corinthians 7, verse 1. Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. And when it comes to our eyes, our text is the place to begin.

Lord, turn away my eyes from looking at worthlessness. But that's not where we have to end. That's the negative.

What's the positive? We must not look at that which will cause sin. So what do we look at? I close with this verse, Hebrews chapter 12. Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

What are those next words? Fixing our eyes on Jesus. Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. May I run the race before me, strong and brave to face the foe, looking only unto Jesus as I. Men, let's be victors.

You can do it. Through grace, by the Spirit, you can do it as you obey God. Let's pray.

Father, this is a difficult concept for many of us because it's a battle that many fight. Virtually every one of us, brothers in the Lord here today, know this battle. Many of our sisters also know this battle in one way or another, through their own struggles, through the struggles of their husbands or their sons, through the struggles they have with the culture and society in which we live.

So, Lord, we're talking about revival in these days, and we want you to clean us up. I pray that you will do that for Jesus' sake. Lord, take our eyes off the worthless.

Put our eyes on the Holy One, our Lord Jesus Christ. Grant us the determination to live according to the victory that is ours in Christ, united with Him in His death and His resurrection, dead to sin, alive to holiness. I pray, O Lord, today that this will be a day of repentance, of faith, of commitment.

Work as it pleases you, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Men, let me just say this to you.

Ladies, too, but mainly to you, men. A lot of preachers, I suppose, would ask for you to raise hands and walk down an aisle or come and confess your sin openly and publicly and stand in front of the people of God and make promises and all of this. I'm just not convinced that's the right way to go.

I have my own sins that I deal with in my life, and I know that there are areas of my life where I have wrestled with victory, not having victory. And I say this to you while it's sort of fresh in my mind, but the fact is that I had a very blessed time. One day while I was on vacation, I was all alone, sitting on the screened-in porch of the Alumni Center down at Columbia International University, just me and the Bible and God.

And I went through a whole litany of things. I asked the Spirit of God to reveal sins, and I confessed and confessed and confessed and confessed and went back to the Word of God and prayed. And I had found a fresh victory in my life in some areas.

And so my plea to you, my encouragement to you, brothers, I'm not going to ask you to walk down an aisle. What I'm asking you to do is find some time, give yourself two or three hours, where you can find a place to be absolutely alone with God, nobody around you, no telephone, no cell phone, a place where your family can't interrupt you, where nobody can interrupt you, and take your Bible and pray and be honest with God and name those sins as sins and say, Lord, I don't have strength to deal with those things anymore. But I'm claiming my position in Christ.

And then one after another, until you can get up off of your chair or off of your knees with a new sense of being clean before God. That's what you need. That's what I need.

I encourage you to do that even today. Oh, what a blessing if many of you would just cry out to God even as we come before the Lord's day. Come and come with me.

This is Mr. Don.

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