

“DID GOD SAY ... ? SATAN’S ATTACK ON SEX, II.”

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

February 6, 2022, 10:30 AM

Texts for the Sermon: Galatians 5:16-24

My purpose this morning is a pastoral one. As a shepherd of this flock I care deeply for the sheep especially when they are in danger, and we are all in grave danger from the enemy of our souls. I have asked God to help me speak with clarity, truth, love, compassion and grace. I love you and I desire nothing but God’s best for you.

Prayer: Holy Father, may the words of my mouth and the meditations and reflections of all our hearts be pleasing and acceptable to you. Deliver us from the evil one and all distractions and destroy his work among us. Glorify yourself in the preaching of your Holy Word. Amen.

Introduction.

In Homer’s epic novel, *Odyssey*, he tells the story of the Greek hero Odysseus (Ulysses), king of Ithaca, and his journey home after the Trojan War. Before his journey Odysseus was warned of some serious dangers that lay ahead. Perhaps most serious of all was beguiling and seductive song of the Sirens, beautiful half women, half bird creatures who’s irresistible singing led sailors to shipwreck in pursuit of them. They had lured countless sailors to their death by their songs.

So Odysseus had all of his sailors plug their ears with beeswax and tie him to the mast. He ordered his men to leave him tied tightly, no matter how much he would beg them to release him. When he heard their beautiful song, he ordered the sailors to untie him but they bound him tighter. When they had passed out of earshot, Odysseus was released and having resisted the temptation made it home to his wife and children. Odysseus was said to become the first mortal to live to tell the tale.

Such is the powerful, seductive lure of sexual immorality, pornography and lust. It took down the strongest judge in Scripture, Samson. It took down the greatest king, a man even after God’s own heart, David. It took down the wisest king, Solomon.

From ancient times to today the seductive power lust has caused the shipwreck of countless souls.

It's not a new problem. Sexually immorality and lust are as old as the fall. It has continued to be a problem in every human heart ever since. Lust is everywhere all the time. Don't think you are the only one or worse than everyone else.

I don't want to get into a bunch of statistics, just know they are all bad and all getting worse.

By the very most conservative of estimates porn has reached over 60% of men, 30% of women, 75% of teens, starting at age 11, 70% of teens hide content from parents.

It is ubiquitous on the internet, found on every normal website, YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok, Netflix. Men gravitate to visual porn, women gravitate to emotional porn, romance novels and movies. But lust is lust, wherever you find it.

We will not make progress in this battle for our souls until we are honest with ourselves on how powerful the Siren's song is, until we agree with God in Scripture.

The desires of the flesh are strong, they keep us from doing the things we want to do (Gal. 5:17).

Romans 7:18-19 I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing.

Why is this battle so hard? Because we face a triple threat, triple trouble, we are fighting a three front war against the trinity of evil: the world, the flesh and the devil.

Whenever I pray the Lord's Prayer and I get to the last line, "Deliver us from evil" I have an understanding with the Lord that when I say the word evil, I mean by it, deliver me from the evil in the world, from the evil in my own heart, my flesh, and the Evil One.

Let's consider this triple threat that opposes the Spirit.

First, Satan.

Satan hates God and everything God has created. Satan can't create anything, he can only take what God has created and try to destroy God's good gifts. Satan is out to destroy us, our souls, marriage, and the gift of sex. Satan hates God's beautiful design and blessing for sex, and pornography is a direct result of his hatred, meant to cheapen, ruin and destroy God's gift. It comes from a place of darkness and evil, from the pit of hell meant to keep us from heaven.

God designed sex to be kept within the protective bounds of marriage between one man and one woman and Satan drags it out into public view where it was never meant to be.

Another way to think about this is *sex is like fire*. When it blazes in the fireplace it is a thing of beauty, it gives warmth and light, it is a blessing. But when that fire gets out of the fireplace it ruins everything and destroys the home. Sex outside of marriage, is a fire that will always burn you and others.

Proverbs 6:27-28 Can a man carry fire next to his chest and his clothes not be burned?
28 Or can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?

1 Peter 5:8 Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

Second, the world.

Where is the battle raging the hardest in our world? In our centers of social media, entertainment and worldly pleasures. The most dangerous sins to us are the sins our culture openly celebrates.

Hollywood, movies, TV shows and series, Netflix, Hulu, AppleTV, Disney Plus, social media, internet, Snapchat, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram. Music, radio, Spotify, Pandora, your kids know who the bad boys and bad girls are in the music world. They are assaulted by obscenities, moral filth and trash talk, songs they know by memory.

Lust, immorality, pornography are being normalized in our culture and our senses are being dulled. Our children are being targeted, every app, every social media site is looking to hook them in.

Why do we think godless, immoral, pagans who hate our values, who hate our Christian worldview, are going to produce for our entertainment shows, movies, music and fashions that are godly, moral, pure, God-glorifying, Christ-honoring, Scripture-affirming? Yet Christians drink from their fire hydrants without thinking.

“Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As, to be hated, needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.”

- Alexander Pope, 1688-1744, "An Essay on Man, Epistle II."

Third, the flesh.

Paul writes about sexual immorality and worldly passions and lust in all his letters. The world he lived in was filled with sexual immorality. All the pagan temples, the pagan gods and goddesses, all centered around sex.

He was no stranger to our modern problem. The Galatians are living by the flesh and Paul is pleading with them to walk and live by the Holy Spirit of God.

Paul paints a vivid picture of the life of the flesh.

Galatians 5:19-21 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Elsewhere Scripture teaches that these passions and desires of the flesh in us wage war against our souls and seek to take us captive (I Peter 2:11; Romans 7:23). The freedoms we think we will find in sin actually put us in bondage.

The unregenerate man, the unbeliever has no desire to fight, no interest in being holy or righteous. Our fleshly human nature will constantly rear its head, putting up a resistance to anything from the Spirit. You can tell what is flesh by what you try to hide, keep secret, and also by what makes you angry.

Application and conclusion.

Lets talk about some practical ways to fight this battle.

Parents, the battle starts at home. In a culture saturated with promiscuity and open flaunting of sex, in a culture bombarding our kids with sexual images, you can't be silent or ignorant.

Start training your toddler. When he wants dessert before his meal, say no. When he begs, become firmer. When he says he won't eat his meal, say fine, but no dessert until he does. And add that you really want him to enjoy a dessert, it is a good thing. Desserts are a gift from God to be enjoyed, but only after the meal.

Dessert before a meal and lust have the same source, lack of a disciplined appetite. Children who learn to obey you when you say "no" will be able to later understand that

when God says “no” it is for their protection. Discipline and train your kids for battle, because it is going to be a life-long fight.

Talk to your kids about modesty, purity and sex, about God’s good gift and why and how to protect it. Start early, watch what they are watching, notice how sex is used on TV and counter that with God’s intentions.

Yes, you will have to have rules and restrictions to protect their souls, for their best interests. And yes, they won’t understand or like them but will later.

Hebrews 12:11 All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Let me say it simply and straightforward. There should be no screens of any kind in your kid’s bedrooms or private places. No teenager should have the freedom to look at naked flesh in their bedroom. If your child has a drinking problem, you don’t leave a mini-frig filled with beer in their room and tell them to say away from it.

Keep all the screens in your house in public, in the light, out of the darkness. Use guard rails, speed bumps, filters, Covenant Eyes, all helpful. Don’t let kids go to homes where parents aren’t present.

Smartphones and computers are great tools, a huge convenience, but your kids won’t die if they don’t have them. Facebook, Snapchat are not necessities in life. Kids will seldom see boundaries as good, they will fight and resist. Lovingly explain over and over again, but don’t quit, don’t give up, souls are at stake.

Pay attention to apps, movies, music, reading material. Know the passwords, accountability is key to winning this battle. Trust but verify. If your child questions you checking their phones, checking their history, be clear, it isn’t because you are distrustful, it is because you know how powerful the lure and pull of porn is. You know about Sirens and how many have been shipwrecked.

Parents, it is time to stop allowing Satan to define sex for our children. Build a foundation early before Satan build’s his. The average child is exposed to pornography by age 11. Eleven!!

Parents, you are not above rules. Do the same with your screens. Live by the standards you set for your kids. Model what you want your kids to be and do. Are you watching shows, movies with sex, nudity, adultery, fornication?

You can't watch sex and nudity in a movie or TV show and fulfil Christ's command to not look at another person with lust. And if someone tries to object saying it's no different than all that graphic violence, I will quickly answer, the violence is always fake, the nudity never is.

Managing lust is not killing lust.

But I need to be clear about something here. Software controls, rules and restrictions are good and necessary but they are not enough in this battle. All they do is manage lust, they don't kill lust and that's the goal.

The problem isn't out there, it's in here. All our desires come from our hearts. Rules, legalism won't fix it. It involves hating sin, killing sin, and turning from what is impure to what is pure. It is a work of the Spirit, not just external controls.

Galatians 5:16 Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Romans 8:13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

Only by the Spirit can we daily and hourly keep killing sin, keep walking away, keep fleeing. Over and over again. It is the most violent battle you will ever face and the one with the most at stake. It is kill or be killed. Be killing sin or it will be killing you.

This admonition actually exposes one of the spiritual lessons of all our sins, especially our besetting sins, our repeated sins. They humble us, they show us how weak we are, they remind us of our inability to save ourselves and our constant need of a Savior.

It's a winnable war.

Paul paints a vivid picture of the difference between the life of the flesh and the life of the Spirit. One is in the image of Satan and the other is in the image of Christ. The fruit of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit. By the fruit, you can know the tree.

It is interesting to note the contrast between the two lists of fruit. The first starts with lust, the second with love. Love is the opposite of lust. Lust is selfish, lust is about what we want, our own pleasure. Lust is about taking.

Love is about giving, about dying to self, about putting what others need first, love does not insist on its own way. Love desires what is best for someone else, love protects others from lust.

Fathers, teach your daughters, if a guy asks a girl for sex and says “if you loves me you will do it,” she can instantly know he is lying, that he is motivated by lust and maybe what he was looking at on his phone and not by love. Love would not ask such a thing. Love would protect her from his lust.

Consensual immorality is still immorality.

Paul doesn't say if you walk by the Spirit you will never sin or you will have no more lust. He says you will have power to resist them, not give in to them, not let them reign over you. You will have the power to fight them.

Romans 8:5-6 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace.

The best antidote against sin, is to look on what is good, true, beautiful, pure, right.

If you seek to be led by the Spirit, and make the Word of God your guide, and the grace of God your strength, you will find freedom.

The same grace that saves us is the grace that delivers us from all our sins. This grace is the power of God in us that enables us to say no, to renounce ungodliness, to resist worldly passions, to flee from Satan's temptations. Learn the Gospel, preach the Gospel to yourself every day.

Sanctification is a direction, it is a long, hard, narrow path, a journey toward a distant destination. It is a lifelong process with the promise of an exceedingly glorious end. Submission and repentance are a lifestyle; the habit of the disciple who follows after Christ.

When your kids or you sin, confess, repent, seek and give forgiveness, be a grace-filled home. If you catch your child or if they confess to you, don't blow up. Listen, help, pray, guide. Let them know the real problem is not the computer or smart phone, it is their heart. He is not a victim, he is a sinner. It is a sin issue so deal with it with God, be honest. Its sin against God and His Word and His very best for us. Getting caught is always a mercy, always the grace of God, before it gets worse.

Remind them again that you love them, that you won't look down on them if they stumble, you are together in this battle. Remind them the power of the indwelling Spirit is greater than the power of indwelling sin. Encourage them to stay in the battle.

The weapons for this battle are spiritual, prayer and Scripture, confession and repentance, constant vigilance. Rely on His power and grace and courage and strength. And if we have fallen, pray and confess with poverty of spirit, humble yourself before God. Confess your sin and your humble dependence on Him and ask Him to give you a stronger desire for a pure heart and the fruit of self-control.

David sinned greatly against God and because of his sin we have been given some of the greatest prayers of confession. Mark them in your Bible and use them over and over. Psalm 25, 32, 38 and 51. God has shown His love for you in sending His Son to die for you and forgive all your sins. Run toward Christ, toward the light, toward purity, holiness, righteousness.

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:16).

Prayer: Holy and merciful Father, have mercy on us and forgive us for our failures in the continual fight against lust. Forgive us for weak and half-hearted efforts and prayers. By the power of your Holy Spirit in us, grant us new resolve and new power and a greater love and knowledge of you. Grant us the will to say no to every temptation and to resist Satan at every turn. Make us deaf his voice, blind to his enticements, fearful of making shipwreck of our souls.

Sever the root of lust in our hearts and replace it with a far greater and purer passion to be like Christ. Help us to see the beauty of holiness, the pure truth of your Word. In the pure and holy and mighty name of Jesus we pray, Amen.