

Th224 Sin and Atonement: The Restoration of Relationship

Lesson Th224-9 Temptation – Lust of the Eyes

In this lesson we will begin a brief series as we study the nature of temptation which is often the root of sin. The apostle John wrote in his first letter to the church a remarkable passage in regard to sin, temptation, and the believer. This is what he wrote: “Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If any one loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world” (1John 2:15-16, NASB).

First let’s examine what the apostle John calls the “lust of the eyes.” Everyone can be tempted by what they see. This is normal. What we see often produces our strongest emotions and desires. For men this is particularly difficult. They are born programmed to have sexual desires when they see seductive women or images. This is part of the ‘self’ instincts born into men and women—the desire for sexual gratification. Since mankind is out-of-balance because of the broken relationship with God, these desires quickly accelerate to lust which can become very destructive.

King David personally experienced this. David had been king for many years and his armies regularly did battle with the kingdoms surrounding Israel. Springtime was the time when wars were fought. The weather was warming and the severe winter storms had ended. The spring crops were planted and the men were available to go to war. David sent General Joab and the army off to fight the Ammonites. Then the army laid siege to the Ammonite city of Rabbah. But David stayed behind in Jerusalem.

One evening, while the army was away, David was walking around the roof of his palace. Now most of the buildings in Jerusalem had flat roofs with a short parapet wall along the edges. The roof area was used for many purposes. Most houses would have a cistern which would collect rain water that would be used for bathing and cleaning. David’s palace was the largest and tallest building in that part of Jerusalem. From his roof he could look out over the city.

From this vantage point King David looked down onto the roof of a large home nearby. He saw a beautiful woman come up onto the roof and begin to draw water from the cistern. Moments later, thinking that no one could see what she was doing, she began to remove her clothes. David should have averted his gaze and turned away. He had no right to spy upon a neighbor as she clearly was about to bathe. But David held his gaze and watched intently as the nude woman bathed. For David this began to fire sexual desires. The longer he watched the more intense the desires became. Soon the desire became lust. The woman finished her bathing, clothed herself, and went back down into her home. David could not get the images out of his mind. The more he thought about what he had seen, the greater the lust became.

Overpowering lust can cause people to think foolish thoughts and to do things that they will soon regret. David fell into this trap. He called his servants to him and had them go to the woman’s house to bring her to him. The woman was named Bathsheba and she was the wife of one of David’s great warriors. When she was brought into the King’s presence, she had little

choice but to submit to his sexual advances. The lust of King David's eyes would result in his greatest sin. Bathsheba became pregnant while her husband was away at war. David, in an effort to cover his adultery, arranged for her husband to be killed in battle.

What began as a casual walk upon the roof of his palace led to adultery and then murder. It all began with a glance. At any moment he could have turned away and resisted the temptation that he was seeing. After all, David had many wives who would gladly meet any sexual desire he had. But David fell into the trap of the lust of the eyes. He saw something and wanted it (2Sam 11:1-17).

Temptation in itself is not sin. Everyone experiences temptation every day. Often the temptation is from what we see with our eyes. How can we resist all these visual temptations? The answer is remarkably simple. We avert our gaze. We turn our heads and look at something else. The longer we look upon that which tempts us, the quicker the temptation becomes lust which leads to sin. Everyone needs God's help to overcome temptations that begin with our eyes.

This lesson is **important** because it defines one of the primary sources of temptation which leads to sin. Discipline has to start in the heart and mind. God the Holy Spirit can give a person strength to look away, to think on other things. They only need to ask for his help. Paul tells the Philippian believers to think on whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praiseworthy. "Think on these things" (Phil 4:8).

The **main truth** of this lesson is that God can help a person overcome the temptation of the lust of the eyes. Being tempted is not a sin, but yielding to a temptation can lead to sin. The lust of the eyes is part of the world, which we are not to love. The apostle John wrote: "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If any one loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world" (1John 2:15-16).

Let's **review** this lesson—

1. The apostle John wrote and said that there were three main types of temptation. What did he call the one which involves what we see? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you said, "The lust of the eyes," you are correct.
2. What did King David see while he was on the roof of his palace? [Pause]
 - A. If you said that he saw a woman bathing, you are correct.
3. What did King David's lust of the eyes lead to? [Pause]
 - A. If you said that King David committed adultery with Bathsheba, and then had her husband murdered, you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to memorize what the apostle John wrote about temptation. "Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If any one loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world" (1John 2:15-16).