



FROM THE PASTOR

# Weekly Devotional

## Sexual Sin Begins in the Mind

Pastor Heiple 

*But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. — Matthew 5:28*

Today we continue our examination of Question 139 of the *Larger Catechism*, which asks, “What are the sins forbidden in the Seventh Commandment?” The second part of the answer states, “The sins forbidden in the Seventh Commandment, besides the neglect of the duties required, are... all unclean imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and affections; all corrupt or filthy communications, or listening thereunto; wanton looks, impudent or light behaviour, immodest apparel.” Last time we looked at the different kinds of sexual sin, and how each one dishonors God and brings shame and harm to man. This week we consider how sexual sin begins with our thoughts.

In the verse quoted above, our Lord Jesus illustrated how the law of God was never meant to be merely an outward regulation of behavior, but it was to be embraced and internalized in the heart. A man who loved God’s law in his heart should be appalled at the thought of looking lustfully at a woman, for he would perceive the ugliness of such a sinful use of his eyes and the heinousness of such an objectification of the body of the woman, and he would rightly recoil from the thought of such a wicked corruption of God’s good creation. Seeing how far the vast majority of men (and women) are from what should be a knee-jerk response to the notion of sinful sexual thoughts and desires should be a cause for mourning among the people of God.

Yet, such mourning should not be done in despair but in hope, for it is precisely in our recognizing, admitting, and sorrowing over our sins that God forgives us and renews us to repentance (2 Cor. 10:7). For this reason the *Catechism* draws out the implications of the commandments in order that we can discover and expose any unseen sinful thoughts and attitudes, so that we can admit & be sorry for them and beseech God for the grace to fight against them. Accordingly, the first thing we need to be searching our hearts for is uncleanness in our imaginations, thoughts, purposes, and affections. Uncleanness for the Christian is moral not ceremonial and refers to that which is unchaste, lewd, or improper. We must not allow ourselves to imagine, daydream, or think of sinful sexual images or encounters. When these images begin to come into our minds we should immediately stop them and put into practice Phi. 4:8, and think and meditate on things that are noble, pure, lovely, good, and virtuous, for this kind of activity lifts up the mind with goodness, thereby pushing out evil thinking.

As sinners we desire sin, but as Christians we are able to resist temptation and turn away from evil. Thus the Scriptures assure us, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13). Every believer is able to turn away from sinful temptations even in his thoughts because God’s Spirit dwells in him. And Scripture assures us that He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

Since we are able to control our thoughts we have no excuse to allow ourselves to engage in corrupt or filthy communications or light & impudent behavior. The childish double entendre where we say something that conveys a hidden, sexually provocative message, dirty jokes, sexting, and other forms of juvenile delinquency should have no place in the life of a mature Christian. “Wanton looks” is to convey lust for sexual activity with the eyes. In the 17th century the word wantonness was scandalous and insulting. Today we consider wantonness a positive and we call it “sexy” or “hot.” Nearly every magazine or billboard has a person looking out wantonly at the viewer. The multi-billion dollar pornography industry is built upon wanton looks and immodest apparel. The result has been a hyper-sexualization of society at every level, bringing with it such destruction and perversity that it would take several more articles just to cite the statistics. Suffice it to say that God’s Law proves itself to be life, and its violation, death.



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In keeping with the Great Commission, Providence strives to be a transformed Christian community, centered in the worship of God and bearing witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord. As Christ’s disciples, we endeavor to build vibrant lives, strong families, and a fellowship in which members care for and love one another and together seek the well-being of our city, state, and world. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we seek to develop a vital preaching and teaching ministry aimed at drawing men and women to Christ; healing, comforting and nurturing them in the faith; equipping them for service, and deploying them effectively into all walks of life.

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### THE OMNIPOTENCE OF GOD

Sunday Morning · November 12, 2023



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# The Celebration of Worship



## Prelude ☞ Welcome

## Reflection ☞ Preparation

Psalm 115:1-3

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## Call to Worship

Psalm 93

*Leader* The LORD reigns, He is clothed with majesty; The LORD is clothed, He has girded Himself with strength.

*Aff* **Surely the world is established, so that it cannot be moved. Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting.**

*Leader* The floods have lifted up, O LORD, The floods have lifted up their voice; The floods lift up their waves. The LORD on high is mightier Than the noise of many waters, Than the mighty waves of the sea.

*Aff* **Your testimonies are very sure; Holiness adorns Your house, O LORD, forever.**

## Invocation

## Hymn

*Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise* · Trinity 38

## The Sacrament of Baptism

Eden Ruth Brothers, presented by her parents, Justin and Brittany

### *Vows for Covenant Baptism*

<sup>1</sup> Do you acknowledge your child's need of the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ, and the renewing grace of the Holy Spirit?

<sup>2</sup> Do you claim God's covenant promises on her behalf, and do you look in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ for her salvation, as you do for your own?

<sup>3</sup> Do you now unreservedly dedicate your child to God, and promise, in humble reliance upon divine grace, that you will endeavor to set before her a godly example, that you will pray with and for her, that you will teach her the doctrines of our holy religion, and that you will strive, by all the means of God's appointment, to bring her up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

<sup>4</sup> Do you as a congregation undertake the responsibility of assisting the parents in the Christian nurture of this child?

## Scripture Reading

Luke 1:5-20, 26-38

There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years. So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense. Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

But the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, `to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." And Zacharias said to the angel, "How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years." And the angel answered and said to him, "I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time."

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end." Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?" And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

## Song

*We Bow Down* · Insert

## Worship in Giving

### *Offertory*

*Redeemer, Rock, and Refuge* · Joseph M Martin

Words based on Psalm 62 ©2023

## Hymn

*God Moves in a Mysterious Way* · Trinity 128

## Pastoral Prayer

*Children ages 5-8 may be dismissed for Kids' Bible College*

## Sermon

*The God of the Impossible* · Dr. Ray E. Heiple, Jr.*Genesis 18:1-16 NKJV*

<sup>5</sup> Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day.

<sup>6</sup> So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground,

<sup>7</sup> and said, "My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant.

<sup>8</sup> Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.

<sup>9</sup> And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant." They said, "Do as you have said."

<sup>10</sup> So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead it and make cakes."

<sup>11</sup> And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave it to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it.

<sup>12</sup> So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate.

<sup>13</sup> Then they said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" So he said, "Here, in the tent."

<sup>14</sup> And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." (Sarah was listening in the tent door which was behind him.)

<sup>15</sup> Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; and Sarah had passed the age of childbearing.

<sup>16</sup> Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"

<sup>17</sup> And the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, `Shall I surely bear a child, since I am old?'

<sup>18</sup> Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son."

<sup>19</sup> But Sarah denied it, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh!"

<sup>20</sup> Then the men rose from there and looked toward Sodom, and Abraham went with them to send them on the way.

## Hymn

*O Father, You Are Sovereign* · Trinity 75

## Benediction ☞ Postlude

*Following the service, the elders will be available to pray with you at the front of the sanctuary.*