

**Matthew**  
**The Deadly Sin of Lust (Part 2)**  
**Matthew 5:27-30**  
**March 15, 2026**

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Well, I think we can all agree that the internet is a wonderful resource and tool that, frankly, we rely on almost every day, if not every day. But I think we also need to admit that it is a tool that Satan himself has used as well. It has given this generation freer access to feed their lust than any generation in human history.

This week, I read some troubling statistics about internet pornography. Here are a few of the things I discovered. Twelve percent of websites are pornography; and in 2023, the unique monthly visitors to those pornographic websites reached 2.1 billion. Forty-million U.S. adults regularly visit pornography websites. There are sixty-eight million pornographic searches on search engines daily. Forty-three percent of internet users view pornography. Eighty-five percent who regularly access pornography are male, and fifteen percent are female. Thirty percent are in relationships, marriage or otherwise. Fifty percent are single, and twenty percent are divorced or widowed. Tragically, the average age of first exposure to pornography, today, average, is eleven! Seventy-two percent of those who engage in this are between the ages of eighteen and forty-four. Forty-five percent access it at least one time a week, and fifteen percent do so daily. Those are truly tragic statistics. But even more tragic is the fact that many professing Christians, men, women, youth, have been enticed by, have given into, and have even been enslaved by the sin of lust.

Jesus reminds us, in “The Sermon on the Mount,” that all of those who belong to Him, all of those who are a part of His spiritual kingdom hate the sin of lust, and ultimately, by His grace, will not allow it to reign over them. He demands that as His disciples, we fight it with all of our

being, and we cut it out of our lives. In “The Sermon on the Mount,” Jesus describes the righteousness of the citizens of His spiritual kingdom, and that righteousness is a wholehearted obedience to the Scripture that is radically different from the scribes and Pharisees because it's not just about externals. It starts in the heart; it's heart obedience. Jesus, in the rest of Matthew 5, gives us six illustrations of that kind of heart obedience, where His true followers obey God, starting in their hearts.

Last week, we began to study His second illustration. Let's read the paragraph again together. Matthew 5, I'll begin reading in verse 27; Matthew 5, verse 27, these are the words of Christ.

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. If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it's 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's better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell.

Jesus here reminds us that in God's eyes, sexual lust violates the Seventh Commandment against adultery. And as Jesus' disciples, we must take whatever steps necessary to cut lust, along with all sexual sins, out of our lives. That's the point of this paragraph.

Now, last week, we began to study it together and let me just remind you of what we learned. First of all, we considered “The Law against Adultery Recalled.” In verse 27, Jesus quotes the Seventh Commandment, “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.’” In light of that, we considered what this command forbids; “Specifically, of course, it Forbids Adultery.” But “Generally,” we noted that because of the nature of the Ten

Commandments, it also excludes “All Sexual Sins.” Then we considered “What This Seventh Commandment Requires” of us who know and love God, and that is “Sexual Purity.” Last week, we also considered, secondly, “The Law against Adultery Misinterpreted.” Jesus here doesn't state the scribes' misinterpretation, as He does with the first illustration. But by applying it to lust, He makes it clear that the scribes did not apply it to lust. Of course, there were some Jewish rabbis that made this connection. But most ignored or even downplayed the sin of lust. So Jesus here corrects their misunderstanding and ours by giving us, in verse 28, His own authoritative interpretation of the Seventh Commandment. So today, as we prepare our hearts for the Lord's Table, let's consider, thirdly, “The Law against Adultery Explained.”

Look again at verse 28. Verse 27, he quotes the Commandment, and He says, “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.” Now today, in the limited amount of time we have because of the Lord's Table, I just want to look at “The Sin That Jesus Condemns,” the sin that Jesus condemns. This is the first part of verse 28. Look at it again, “I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her.” That's the sin that Jesus condemns.

So let's take it apart, and I want to ask a series of questions to come to understand this sin. The first question is this, “Who can commit this sin?” Verse 28 says, “I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her.” Literally, the Greek text says, “everyone looking.” Now, obviously, Jesus directs His comments here to men. He says, everyone who looks at a woman. That's not, ladies, because you cannot commit the sin of lust, or don't, nor is it because it's not sinful for you if you do. No, He speaks directly to men, as I noted for you last week, because in the first century, men were often given a pass even on the sin of adultery, as long as they weren't involved with a married woman. And because of that, the teachers of the first

century also downplayed or even completely ignored the sin of lust when it came to men. So, although Jesus speaks to men here, this statement condemns all sinful sexual desire by everyone. As I noted for you last week, the Seventh Commandment doesn't limit sexual sin to men, and Jesus doesn't limit here the sin of lust to men. Just like the Seventh Commandment itself, Jesus' intended audience is universal. Looking to lust at anyone other than your spouse is sinful, whether you are male or female. So, Jesus here condemns everyone who looks to lust. That's the first question.

Let's consider a second question as we think about this sin. "What is the focus of this sin?" Again, verse 28 says, "I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust." Again, because He directed this command at men, He speaks specifically of looking to lust at a woman. But remember what we learned last week about the purpose of the Ten Commandments. Each of the Ten Commandments forbids the sin mentioned but also commands the opposite virtue. We also learned last week that not only is the one sin mentioned in the Commandment forbidden, but all sins of the same kind are also forbidden. And that's true about Jesus' statement here. "He condemns all sexual desire for anyone other than your spouse." That includes looking to lust at the opposite sex, the same sex, a close relative, a child, or an animal. Those are the categories in which sexual activity is forbidden. In addition to that, and I'm not going to take you to Ephesians 5, but I would encourage you to go listen if you have questions about this. In Ephesians 5, verses 3 and following, Paul deals with sexual sin at length. And there, he not only forbids sexual sin and thoughts with those who are not your spouse, but he also forbids misusing physical intimacy even with your spouse, if it's in ways that God forbids. What are the ways God would forbid that with your spouse? That's any deviation from the divine plan.

What are those kinds of sexual sins that would be forbidden even with your spouse? Sexual intimacy by force, sadomasochism, fetishes, pornography, multiple partners. Even if those things happen with your spouse, they are contrary to the divine design. And since these acts are sinful, it's also sinful to desire such sexual expressions. It comes down to this. Again, sexual intimacy, physical intimacy in marriage is a gift of God. And it's given to us as an expression of the love that a husband and his wife have for one another. Anything, any even sexual act between a couple that violates the principle of expressing love for that person is sinful. And therefore, any sexual desire for that act is also sinful. That's the focus of the sin.

That brings us to a third question, and that is, "What is the nature of this sin?" What is the nature of this sin? Verse 28, "I say to you that everyone who looks...with lust." Now, before we consider what the sin of lust is, I want to start, as I often do, by considering what lust is not. Because sadly, some Christians carry around sort of guilty consciences for things they shouldn't be guilty about. We tend to err on one side or the other, right? Either we're guilty when we shouldn't be, or we're not feeling guilty when we should be. So let's make sure that we understand "What Lust Is Not. First of all, "It is not lust to find someone physically beautiful or attractive." Human beauty is part of God's good creation. God looked at His creation, including man and woman, and said "It was very good." Even the Bible describes physical beauty.

For example, in Genesis 29:17, Rachel is described as "beautiful in form and face." In 1 Samuel 16:12, David is described as "handsome." This is why John Calvin said, "Look, it's not merely the sight of a woman that Jesus condemns here, but it's looking with the intention of lusting. That's what Christ forbids." The Puritans also agreed. Richard Baxter said, "It is one thing to see a comely person (or a beautiful person), another to desire her unlawfully." Another of the

Puritans, William Gouge, said basically this, that “beauty is a gift of God, and it can be rightly acknowledged without sin.” So that's not lust.

Secondly, “It's not lust to anticipate, as an unmarried person, the reality of physical intimacy in marriage someday.” Proverbs 5, verses 18 and 19, as Solomon is teaching his sons, he teaches them to anticipate the reality that married love is a gift of God, and that when that day comes for them, they are to be intoxicated with the physical relationship with their spouse. So it's not sin. God made us with that desire, and to enjoy that gift in marriage in the way He designed is pleasing to Him. It is honorable, as Hebrews says.

Thirdly, it's not lust “To anticipate and be excited about enjoying physical intimacy with your spouse.” Read the Song of Solomon. There's an entire book in the Bible that rehearses the joy of married love. It's not lust to anticipate that.

Number four, “To enjoy memories of your spouse's body.” Again, read Song of Solomon, and again and again, he recounts and recalls those things.

Number five, “it's not lust to have your body sexually excited without sinful thinking or conscious decision.” That's what Jesus says here, Matt. 5:28, right? It's lust when you look in order to crave or desire.

Number six, it's not lust “To experience external sexual temptation;” someone presents you with a temptation to sexual sin externally. That's not lust. Why? Because even Jesus was tempted externally. Hebrews, chapter 4, verse 15 says, he was “tempted in all things (points) *as we are*, yet without sin.”

And number seven, it's not lust “to experience momentary internal temptation to sexual lust.”

Now, Jesus never experienced this because He didn't have a fallen nature, but we do. And to be

tempted internally is not sin in and of itself. 1 Corinthians 10, verse 13 says, “No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able.” Clearly in that text, temptation, in and of itself, is not sin. John Owen, the Puritan said, “Sin lies not in the proposal of the object to the mind, but in the entertaining of it with delight and consent.” Luther quoted an early church father as saying something like this, “You can't stop a bird from flying over your head (In other words, you can't stop a thought from flitting across your mind.) but, however, (The proverb goes on to say.) you can prevent that same bird from building a nest in your hair.” And in the same way, you can prevent that fleeting thought from developing and gaining ground in your mind and heart. None of those is lust.

So let's consider then “What Lust Is Biblically.” And I want to do this in three ways. Let's start by “Defining the Word Itself.” The Greek word for ‘lust’ is a broad word, it's not just sexual, it's a broad word meaning ‘desires.’ The word is ‘*epithumia*,’ and it means ‘a strong desire.’ It actually can be used for a good desire. For example, in the Septuagint, it's a desire for God's Word in Psalm 119. Even a desire for God Himself in Isaiah 26. In the New Testament, it's the good desire Christ had to eat the Passover with His Disciples in Luke 22. It's used of a desire for food in Luke 15. A desire to know divine mysteries in Matthew 13—we'll get there one day. It's used as a desire for anything good in Philippians 1:23.

But most often in Scripture, this word ‘*epithumia*’ is used of a sinful desire. In fact, in Exodus 20, verse 17, the Septuagint uses this word ‘*epithumia*,’ lust, for the Tenth Commandment, “You shall not covet.” Paul uses it the same way when he quotes the Tenth Commandment in Romans, chapter 7, verse 7. Again, this is a broad word though, don't think yet, ‘sexual desire.’ Think a ‘sinful desire for all kinds of things.’ That kind of lust is endemic to the unregenerate

heart. Paul describes this in Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 3, where he says, “We all...lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh (our body) and of the minds.” That's true of all of us before Christ. Titus 3:3, again, speaking of before Christ, “For we also once were...enslaved to various lusts and pleasures (various cravings, various sinful desires).” When God saved you, Christian, He gave you a new heart; He gave you a redeemed heart, and with that heart came a new set of desires.

However, the sinful cravings didn't go away. Why is that? Because while He gave you a new heart, you retained what the Bible calls ‘your flesh,’ that part of you that remains unredeemed, your unredeemed humanness. Its beachhead is your body. It's not that your body is evil, it's not; it's a gift of God. But the beachhead of that flesh is, in fact, your body, which remains unredeemed. And so these desires don't go away. In fact, lust then, this word ‘*epithumia*,’ these sinful cravings is the primary characteristic of your flesh. James 1:14, “But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by (What?) his own lust (his own craving).” Or 1 Peter 2:11, “abstain (flee) fleshly lusts (believers) which wage war against your soul.” So that's the reality. Now in the New Testament, this word ‘*epithumia*’ translated ‘lust,’ is not only used generally of all sinful desires, but it is often used specifically of sinful sexual desires. And that's how Jesus uses it here in Matthew 5. So that's the word.

Now let's continue to look at what lust is by “Defining the Sin Itself” that Jesus mentions here. Verse 28 is very clear, “Everyone who looks with lust.” Actually, in the Greek text, there is a purpose clause; let me read it for you literally, Jesus says this, “Everyone looking in order to lust, looking for the purpose of or with the goal of sexually craving that person.” So Jesus then defines this sin, let's define it this way, as “looking for the purpose or goal of promoting sexual

desire for something or someone who is not your spouse.” That’s a definition of the sin Jesus has in mind here.

Now this sin, as we continue to look at what it is, let’s see if we can look at “Identifying Its Expressions.” What are the primary ways that this sin of sexual lust expresses itself? We violate the Seventh Commandment in our hearts, first of all, by “Looking at a person” in order to excite or fulfill sinful sexual desire, looking at a person. Secondly, we sin in this way when we “Look at an image” in order to excite or fulfill sinful sexual desire. If you’re looking to lust, the medium doesn’t matter; it might be a drawing, a painting, something in print, it may be a digital image on television, in a movie, or a video game. Of course, as I began this message, in today’s world, it’s often a digital photo or video on the internet. But regardless, looking at a person or looking at an image in order to sexually crave someone who is not your spouse is the sin Jesus is dealing with here.

A third expression of this sin is “Creating or recalling sexual images in the mind or the imagination.” This is a different kind of looking; this is a looking conjured in the mind. It consists of mental images that you play on the iMac screen in your mind. Whether you are recalling explicit images that you have seen or drawing sinful images based on something you have read or heard, or you’re creating your own fantasy from scratch or from some combination of these things.

A fourth expression of this sin may surprise you, “Doing anything—intentionally or carelessly—that excites lust in others.” Now, let me be clear here. Lust is a sin, and the person who lusts is responsible for the sin of lust. Don’t ever say, “They made me do this.” That’s an attack on the person of Christ; He saw things and was externally tempted, and He didn’t give in. Nobody

makes you lust, okay? Let's be clear about that. The person who engages in it is entirely responsible for his or her sin. However, it is also sin to excite lust in others.

Now, how exactly can you and I be guilty of exciting others to lust? First of all, “Moving your body in a way that's intended to produce lust.” Proverbs 6:25 speaks of a woman using her eyes seductively, and of course, any part of the body can be used seductively—that's sin. “Wearing clothing or revealing your body—intentionally or carelessly—in a way that is likely to elicit lust.” In Proverbs 7:10, the immoral woman dresses seductively; she clothes herself in order to make herself sexually appealing to men. This is wrong, by the way, whether you're male or female. In today's world, this would include sexting, sending digital images intended to create sexual desire, or looking at those images in order to enjoy that for that same goal. I think it also includes posting images of yourself on social media that are fully intended by you to make yourself sexually appealing to people who aren't your spouse.

A third expression of exciting lust in others is “Using words intended to seduce or tempt sexually.” The Proverbs has a lot to say about that; using speech filled with sexual innuendo, explicit off-color comments, and even dirty jokes (5:3; 7:16-21). Ephesians 5:4 is all about sexual sins of speech, “*no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting.” By the way, this includes talking about the bodies of others in a sexual way. And then finally, we can excite lust in others and be guilty of sin ourselves when we “Engage in physical contact that arouses sexual desire which cannot be legitimately or biblically fulfilled.” You see that in 1 Thessalonians 4:6; you are defrauding that person. In Proverbs 7:13, the immoral woman “seizes him (the young man) and kisses him, and with brazen face” speaks sexually and seductively to him. So then, the specific sin that our Lord confronts here is looking at another person, regardless of how you look at them, directly, at an image of them, or an image you create in your mind, looking at

another person in order to excite or fulfill sexual desire. And by implication, doing anything intentionally or carelessly that excites that temptation to sin in others. That's the sin that Jesus condemns here.

Now, in sharing that with you, I am struck with two realities. First of all, if you're here this morning and you are not a follower of Jesus Christ, you have never repented of your sins, you likely think it's going to be okay for you at the judgment. What Jesus is telling you, in the text we just looked at, is you don't have a shadow's chance at the judgment of pleasing God because you have broken many of those things I just shared, as have the rest of us. So don't think for a moment it's going to be okay when you stand before Christ—it's not going to be okay. In fact, what you need is the forgiveness that God alone can give you for your sins against Him.

Ultimately, sexual sin is against the person, but it's even more against God. It's a sin against the image of God in that person. That's why David, after committing adultery with Bathsheba, says “Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight.” Your only hope is the forgiveness found in Jesus Christ. He purchased forgiveness by His death for everyone who would ever believe in Him. I love what Peter says in Acts 10:43, he says, “Of Him (Jesus the Messiah) all the prophets bear witness that through His name, everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.” That's my prayer and plea for you this morning. The only way you will ever be forgiven for your sexual sins of thought and action will be because Jesus Christ died to pay the debt you deserved, and God forgives you because you repent and believe in Him. And that's my prayer for you this morning.

A second reality comes to me as I study this passage, and that is for us who are already believers. Here's the great reality of the Gospel. You know, my prayer this morning, I prayed about God's holiness on the one hand, that's what we have seen in this text. But I also prayed

about there is forgiveness with you that you might be feared. Christian, here's the amazing reality. God has already forgiven you all your sins, including every sexual sin of thought or act. Listen to Ephesians 1:7, "In Him (Christ) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses (plural, all of our individual sins), according to the riches of His grace." I love Colossians 2:13, "When you were dead in your transgressions...He (God) made you alive together with Him (Christ. Here it is.) having forgiven (past tense, having forgiven) us **all** our transgressions." If you're in Christ, every sin that you have committed against the Lord, including sexual sins of thought and act, those sins are forgiven in Jesus Christ. And it's that amazing, complete forgiveness of our sins that we remember and celebrate in the Lord's Table this morning. Take a moment and prepare your heart as the men come.

Our Father, thank You for the reminder of Your holiness this morning, of what You expect of us in how we use the incredible gift of physical intimacy that You intended to be a blessing in our lives as we enjoy the spouse of our youth, the spouse that you brought into our lives, to express our love to one another, to picture the oneness of souls with the oneness of bodies. Father, thank You for that gift and forgive us, oh God, for sinning against You in any way, misusing that gift.

Father, I pray for those here this morning who don't know You. Help them to see that they have no chance, no chance at the judgment, and they would cry out even today for the forgiveness that's found in Your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. Through His life, death, and resurrection, He purchased that forgiveness, if they will be repentant and put their faith in Him. I pray You would produce that in their hearts even this morning.

Lord, for the rest of us, as we come to the Lord's Table, help us to confess our sins to You, to seek Your forgiveness. But Father, even beyond that, help us to seek the power to overcome those sins and to walk in purity. Remind us, oh God, that the goal is for us to increasingly be

like Jesus in our moral purity. Don't let us settle for anything short of that, be satisfied with anything less than purity. Lord, we live in a filthy world: don't let us be filthy like them. You have cleansed us; You have forgiven us. And now, Lord, as we come to take up the Lord's Table, help each of us to confess our sins to You, resolving to turn from those sins and to walk again in obedience to You. Thank You, that You hear the penitent heart. We pray that You would help us now to take up the Lord's Table in a way that honors Him and His sacrifice. We pray in His name. Amen.