



RESURGENCE

A Passion for Purity Vs Passive Prayers

John Piper

Matthew 5:28-29

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 is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. (Matthew 5:28-29)

When you are enticed sexually, do you fight with your mind to say no to the image and then mightily labor to fill your mind with counter-images that kill off the seductive image? "If you put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit, you will live" (Romans 8:13). Too many people think they have struggled with temptation when they have prayed for deliverance, and hoped the desire would go away. That is too passive. Yes, God works in us to will and to do his good pleasure! But the effect is that we "work out our salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12-13). Gouging out your eye may be a metaphor, but it means something very violent. The brain is a "muscle" to be flexed for purity, and in the Christian it is supercharged with the Spirit of Christ.

What this means is that we must not give a sexual image or impulse more than five seconds before we mount a violent counterattack with the mind. I mean that! Five seconds. In the first two seconds we shout, "NO! Get out of my head!" In the next two seconds we cry out: "O God, in the name of Jesus, help me. Save me now. I am yours."

Good beginning. But then the real battle begins. This is a mind war. The absolute necessity is to get the image and the impulse out of our mind. How? Get a counter-image into the mind. Fight. Push. Strike. Don't ease up. It must be an image that is so powerful that the other image cannot survive. There are lust-destroying images and thoughts.

For example, have you ever in the first five seconds of temptation, demanded of your mind that it look steadfastly at the crucified form of Jesus Christ? Picture this. You have just seen a peek-a-boo blouse inviting further fantasy. You have five seconds. "No! Get out of my mind! God help me!" Now, immediately, demand of your mind - you can do this by the Spirit (Romans 8:13). Demand of your mind to fix its gaze on Christ on the cross. Use all your fantasizing power to see his lacerated back. Thirty-nine lashes left little flesh intact. He heaves with his breath up and down against the rough vertical beam of the cross. Each breath puts splinters into the lacerations. The Lord gasps. From time to time he screams out with intolerable pain. He tries to pull away from the wood and the massive spokes through his wrist rip into the nerve endings and he screams again with agony and pushes up with his feet to give some relief to his wrists. But the bones and nerves in his pierced feet crush against each other with anguish and he screams again. There is no relief. His throat is raw from screaming and thirst. He loses his breath and thinks he is suffocating, and suddenly his body involuntarily gasps for air and all the injuries unite in pain. In torment, he forgets about the crown of two-inch thorns and throws his head back in desperation, only to hit one of the thorns perpendicular against the cross beam and drive it half an inch into his skull.

© 1999 *Desiring God*
Website: www.desiringGod.org
Email: mail@desiringGod.org
Toll Free: 888.346.4700

Page 1 of 2
11.10.1999
www.theresurgence.com

His voice reaches a soprano pitch of pain and sobs break over his pain-wracked body as every cry brings more and more pain.

Now, I am not thinking about the blouse any more. I am at Calvary. These two images are not compatible. If you will use the muscle of your brain to pursue - violently pursue with the muscle of your mind - images of Christ crucified with the same creative energy that you use to pursue sexual fantasies, you will kill them. But it must start in the first five seconds - and not give up.

So my question is: Do you fight, rather than only praying and waiting and trying to avoid? It is image against image. It is ruthless, vicious mental warfare, not just prayer and waiting. Join me in this bloody warfare to keep my mind and body pure for my Lord and my wife and my church. Jesus suffered beyond imagination to "purify for Himself a people for His own possession" (Titus 2:14). Every scream and spasm was to kill my lust - "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness" (1 Peter 2:24).

Pursuing purity of heart at any cost,

Pastor John