

Chapter 4: Spiritual Far-Sightedness

A Topical Study

Introduction:

You know the nature of battle, you're equipped with the right weapons, you're battling with fellow soldiers, and you have the triune God as your ally. When you confess and repent of your lust and lack of self-control, it's somewhat easy to stay motivated in the battle for a little while. The challenge comes when the battle drags out. What will keep you on the right track?

The battle against lust is a battle of desire. **But desire is not the enemy**, in fact, desire is a crucial element for victory. If you want to endure in the fight, the fight needs to be fueled by desire, not emptied of it. The question is: what do you crave?

Think of your most favorite food. Personally, I have a thing for Taco Bell. But if you find that revolting, think of the food of your choice. Now, imagine that I haven't eaten in three days. If you came up to me, placed a huge Grilled Stuffed Burrito from Taco Bell (or whatever you're thinking of) in front of me, and left me with the simple command, "don't eat the burrito," How challenging would it be to resist? *Incredibly challenging*. I'd eat it in two bites the moment you leave the room.

Now let's change the scenario slightly. I haven't eaten in three days, in you come with the burrito and the command: "*don't eat the food.*" But as I look over your shoulder, I see someone else in the room. This individual holds up a check for \$1,000,000 and says, "If you don't eat the burrito, you get this check." How much easier did it get to resist the temptation right in front of me? It's a ridiculous illustration, I know, but I hope the point is clear: **the most effective way to reject an immediate craving is to look past it toward a far greater reward.**

How an Allurement becomes an Annoyance – Read 2 Timothy 2:4

There is no doubt about it—pornography is alluring. It calls out to our *natural, God-given* desires for sex and encourages us to fulfill that desire apart from God's will, God's way, and God's timing. If you're struggling with pornography, it's because *you really, really like it*. There is a deeply-rooted desire so strong that it often seems impossible to conquer. How do we fight this desire? **With an infinitely greater, infinitely more fulfilling desire.**

2 Timothy 2:4 describes the Christian as a soldier. A good soldier doesn't get "entangled in civilian pursuits." **What civilians see as allurements, soldiers see as annoyances.** What is the greater desire that keeps the soldier from pursuing the world?

You have been enlisted by the King of kings! He has graciously saved you, washed you, and remade you! As recipients of God's bountiful grace and mercy, how do we get to the point where "pleasing the one who enlisted" us is our strongest desire?

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Our desire to please him springs from our thankfulness for what he has done. Paul alludes to this earlier in the chapter when he speaks of the One “who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began” (v. 9). As you grow in your gratitude for the Gospel, you’ll grow in your desire to please the one who has called you and the sins you once craved will start looking more like annoyances and entanglements that distract you instead of allurements that you crave.

How is the ‘annoyance’ of pornography robbing you of greater joys?

Running in Jesus’ Shadow – Read Hebrews 12:1–17

If you read Hebrews 11, you see example after example of regular men and women who looked past the here-and-now and onto a far greater reward. Abraham looked past his home country toward “a city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God” (v. 10). Moses looked past the “fleeting pleasure of sin” because he saw the “reproach of Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt” (v.v. 25–26). And on and on the list goes. This is what faith is: “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (11:1). Every single person in Hebrews 11 was enticed by the world, yet God gave them the gift of faith—to see past the allurements and onto the true treasure that God had promised.

Hebrews 12 shifts the attention from these Old Testament Saints onto you today: “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us” (12:1). You have sins that are weighing you down, including your lust pornography. They cripple you and trip you up as you run the Christian race.

According to Hebrews 12:2–4, what is presented as the energizer of endurance in the race?

How did Jesus provide an example for how to run the race (read also Hebrew 4:14–16)?

Just as Christ endured hardship by focusing on the joy before him, we are called to endure this life by fixing our eyes on our great reward. What is the joyous reward promised to those who follow in Christ’s footsteps?

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Not only does it take faith to see this, but it takes faith to *desire* this. Your desire for pornography will never fade until you grow in your joyful pursuit of Christ. Paul says in Philippians 3:8, “I count everything as loss because of **the surpassing worth** of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” Do you see the knowledge of Christ of greater worth than *any* other pursuit in your life? Until you do, do not expect victory over your lust.

Preoccupied with Righteousness – Read 2 Peter 1:3–10

It’s common to get addicted to porn during times of relaxation and laziness. The good news is, if you pursue Christ, there will be plenty to keep you busy. Every day presents itself with new opportunities to please your Master, new circumstances in which to follow in the footsteps of Christ, and new temptations that seek to pull you off course. Being a Christ-follower is full-time job!

As we conclude this study, 2 Peter 1:3–10 is fitting. In it, we find a snapshot of the Christian race. We find the fuel that drives us forward, the promises that prod us on, and the virtues to practice—topped off with both warnings and encouragements for those in the race.

Verse 9 describes the fuel for the Christian race and how we receive it. What are they?

Verse 10 mentions “precious and very great promises” through which we “become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in this world because of sinful desire.” What do you think are those promises?

Verses 5–7 provide a detailed list of virtues that we are to pursue in the Christian life. Out of this list, name 2-3 three that you are particularly weak in.

If you do not possess these qualities, how does verse 9 describe you? And how it make you vulnerable to temptations attacks?

Verse 9 gives a comforting reassurance: “be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, **for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.**” What a guarantee! “*Never fall*”? You see, if you’re so preoccupied with pursuing Christlikeness, you’re more likely to side-step temptation. You’ll see it more as an annoyance than an allurements. You see it as a weight that is holding you back. You’ll see it as a blinder that makes you forget your own redemption. And you won’t want that if you desperately want Christ.

Conclusion

Christian, there is hope for you. Although the fight will be long, and the enemy will be fierce, the God of Heaven is on your side. He saves you by grace, fills you with his Spirit, blesses you with his Word, grants you access through prayer, enables you to fight, convicts you when you're wrong, promises you with reward, provides you with an example and intercessor through Christ, and ultimately promises your glorification. One day, you will be released from the very presence of sin and provided entrance into the very presence of your Savior. Let this joyful reality fill your soul. Let it enrapture your heart with praise. And don't let something as vile, filthy, and disgusting as pornography rob you of that joy. You have a battle to fight and a race to run. Through Christ, let's get to it.