

# Matthew 5:29-30 Commentary

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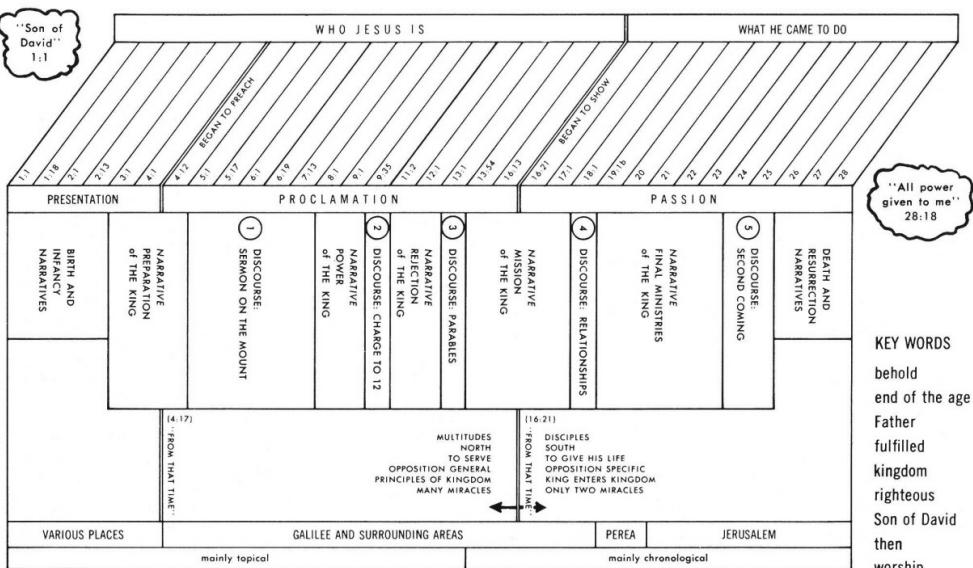
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## Sermon on the Mount

MATTHEW CONTAINS KEY VERSES: 1:1 "The book of the generation of  
15 PARABLES Jesus Christ, the son of David, the  
20 MIRACLES son of Abraham."

2:2 "Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."



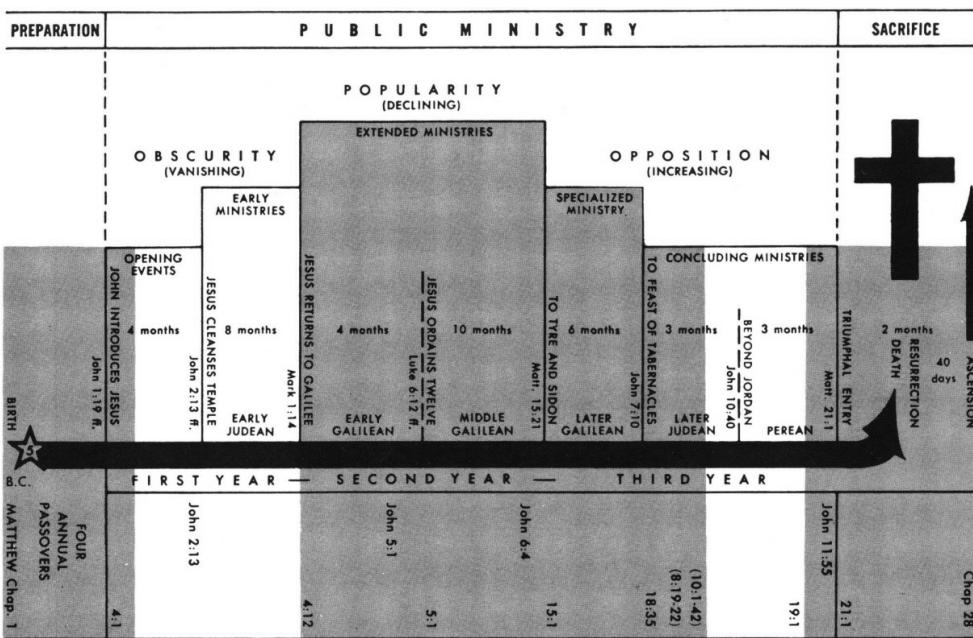
**Click chart to enlarge**

Charts from Jensen's Survey of the NT - used by permission

### Another Chart from Charles Swindoll

# THE LIFE OF JESUS AS COVERED

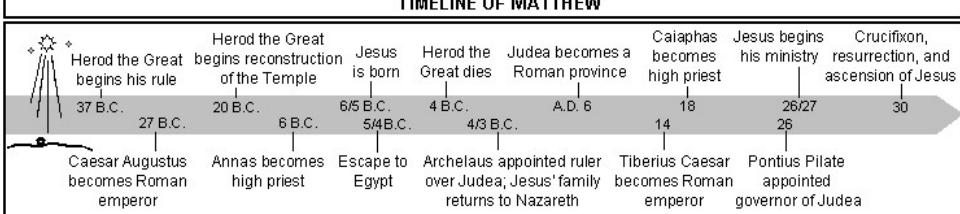
BY MATTHEW (shaded area)



**Click chart to enlarge**

## **Jesus Birth and Early Years Leading up to the Sermon on the Mount Matthew 1-7**

## TIMELINE OF MATTHEW



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Source: Ryrie Study Bible

Matthew 5:29 "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. (NASB: Lockman)

**Greek:** *ei de o ophthalmos sou o* dextos *skandalizei* (3SPAI) *se, exele* (2SAAM) *auton kai bale* (2SAAM) *apo sou; sumpherei* (3SPAI) *gar soi ina apoletai* (3SAMS) *en ton melon sou kai me olon to soma sou blethe* (3SAPS) *eis geennan.*

**Amplified:** If your right eye serves as a trap to ensnare you or is an occasion for you to stumble and sin, pluck it out and throw it away. It is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be cast into hell (Gehenna).

**NLT:** So if your eye--even if it is your good eye--causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

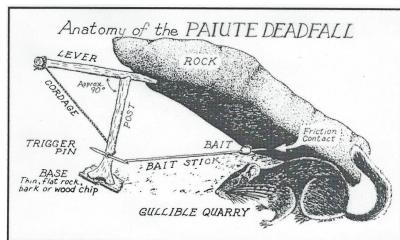
**Philips:** "Yes, if your right eye leads you astray pluck it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than that your whole body should be thrown on to the rubbish-heap. ([New Testament in Modern English](#))

**Wuest:** So then, if your eye, the right one, causes you to stumble, root it out and throw it from you, for it is to your profit that one of your members perish and not that your whole body be thrown into hell. (Wuest: Expanded Translation: Eerdmans)

**Young's Literal:** 'But, if thy right eye doth cause thee to stumble, pluck it out and cast from thee, for it is good to thee that one of thy members may perish, and not thy whole body be cast to gehenna.

**IF YOUR RIGHT EYE MAKES YOU STUMBLE, TEAR IT OUT AND THROW IT FROM YOU:** *ei de o ophthalmos sou o dextos skandalizei* (3SPAI) *se, exele* (2SAAM) *auton kai bale* (2SAAM) *apo sou*

- Mt 18:8,9; Mark 9:43-48) (19:12; Romans 6:6; 8:13; 1 Corinthians 9:27; Galatians 5:24; Colossians 3:5; 1 Peter 4:1-3
- [Matthew 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Matthew 5:27-30: Who is an Adulterer? 1 - Study Guide](#) - dropdown - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 5:27-30: Who is an Adulterer? 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 5:27-30: Who is an Adulterer? 2 - Study Guide](#) - dropdown - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 5:27-30: Who is an Adulterer? 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 5:29-30: Man's Biggest Problem - Study Guide](#) - dropdown - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 5:29-30: Man's Biggest Problem](#) - John MacArthur



DEPICTION OF "SKANDALON/SKANDALIZO"

## RADICAL RESPONSE REQUIRED

**Note:** All verbs in **bold red** indicate commands, not suggestions!

**Related Resource:** See expositional comments on Solomon's proverbs dealing with sexual purity = Pr 5:1-14; Pr 5:15-23; Pr 6:20-35; Pr 7:1-27

**Charles Simeon** - MANY of the precepts of our holy religion are so strict, that persons indisposed to obey them are ready to turn away from them in despair, exclaiming, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" But must we on that account keep back the truth, or lower the commands of God to the habits and inclinations of men? Must we not rather "declare the whole counsel of God," and enforce to the uttermost the authority of his word? Our blessed Lord has set us an example in this respect; an example which all his

servants must follow. He had declared, that an impure look was, in God's estimation, constructive adultery. To this it might be objected, that our constitution, rather than our will, was chargeable with this offence. But our Lord shuts out at once all objections of this kind, by saying, that even a right eye or a right hand must be parted with, rather than that we should suffer them to lead us to the commission of any sin; and that, if we refuse to sacrifice any thing for his sake, eternal misery will be our merited and inevitable portion. ([Read the entire sermon - Matthew 5:29,30 The Necessity of Mortifying Every Sin](#))

**Spurgeon** exhorts us to...

Give up the dearest, choicest, and apparently most needful thing, if it leads you into sin. (Pleasures which block the road to heaven ought to be given up) The same rule that bids you avoid sin, bids you also avoid all that leads to sin. If adultery be forbidden, so also is that glance with which the sin usually begins. We are to turn away our eyes from beholding that which leads towards sin, and we are not to touch or taste that which would readily lead us into iniquity. Oh, that we had sufficient decision of character to make short work of everything which tends towards evil! Many persons, when their right eye offends them, put a green shade over it; and when their right hand offends them, they tie it up in a sling. But that is not obeying the command of Christ. He charges you to get rid of everything that would lead you wrong; make a clean sweep of it. You are wrong enough at your best, so do not permit anything to appertain to you, which would lead you still further astray,

**Your eye** indicates the problem is not that you live in a sex crazed society. You have a choice over what your eye can look at or not look at. When the football game pans to the sideline (at you know what), you can consciously choose to look away. Don't delay. Don't underestimate the power of your God given imagination. D. L. Moody, certainly one of the more godly men of the modern era wisely recognized the source of the problem, admitting that...

"I have more trouble with D. L. Moody than with any man I know."

The man I see in the mirror each morning is my greatest impediment to holiness and godliness. Stop saying "The devil made me do it!" When you get up in the morning and look in the mirror to shave, you are looking at your worst problem, because blood bought, heaven bound men still contend daily with the old Sin nature inherited from Adam. Granted, Sin no longer has the right to reign as our master, because of our co-crucifixion and co-resurrection, but it can still rear its ugly head.

**Thomas Fuller** - Our eyes, when gazing on sinful objects, are out of their calling and God's keeping.

**Job** wrote...

I have made a covenant with my eyes. How then could I gaze at a virgin? (Job 31:1)

**Comment:** "Gaze" in Hebrew = consider carefully, diligently consider, discern, get understanding, look carefully, observe, paid close attention, pay heed. Do you get the picture that Job is trying to convey? He's not talking about a casual glance or an accidental viewing of an attractive woman (that would be virtually impossible to avoid in "non-blushing" America... but it is possible to make certain provisions -- all under grace of course -- and they include not going to PG-13 movies or even PG ratings... they have all become too sensual because the moral compass of Americans, especially the media moguls is going "due south" toward the abyss. We can chose not to watch talk shows that bring up "lusty" subjects so commonly these days. So Job is saying don't stare at her because if you do, Jesus says you've already committed adultery in your heart Mt 5:28... pluck your eye out before you do this! That's how enslaving this sin can be... so it requires radical surgery and complete extirpation! Don't just biopsy it! Cut it out completely!

**William Jenkyn** - The right way to put out the fire of lust is to withdraw the fuel of excess.

**Some other passages** related to eyes and lust...

**2 Samuel 11:1** Then it happened in the spring, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him and all Israel, and they destroyed the sons of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David stayed at Jerusalem. 2 Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof **he saw a woman bathing**; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance. 3 So David sent and inquired about the woman. And one said, "Is this not Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"4 And David sent messengers and took her, and when she came to him, he lay with her; and when she had purified herself from her uncleanness, she returned to her house.5 And the woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, "I am pregnant."

**Psalm 119:37** Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity, And revive me in Thy ways.

**Proverbs 4:25** Let your eyes look directly ahead, and let your gaze be fixed straight in front of you.

**Proverbs 6:25-note** Do not desire her beauty in your heart, nor let her catch you with **her eyelids**.

**James 1:14-note** But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

**Expositor's Bible Commentary** - Imagination is a God-given gift; but if it is fed dirt by the eye, it will be dirty. All sin, not least sexual sin, begins with the imagination. Therefore what feeds the imagination is of maximum importance in the pursuit of kingdom righteousness (see note Philippians 4:8). Not everyone reacts the same way to all objects. But if your eye is causing you to sin, gouge it out; or at very least, don't look! The alternative is sin and hell, sin's reward. The point is so fundamental that Jesus doubtless repeated it on numerous occasions (cf. Mt 18:8-9). ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary](#))

**Marvin Vincent** - Christ's meaning here is: "*If your eye or your hand serve as an obstacle or trap to ensnare or make you fall in your moral walk.*" How the eye might do this may be seen in the previous verse. Bengel observes: "*He who, when his eye proves a stumbling-block, takes care not to see, does in reality blind himself.*" The words **scandal** and **slander** are both derived from **skandalon** ([Matthew 5 Greek Word Studies](#))

**Stumble** ([4624](#)) (**skandalizo** from **skandalon**= a trap = put a snare or stumbling block in way; English = scandalize = to offend the moral sense of) means to put a snare (in the way), hence to cause to stumble, to give offense. To entrap, trip up, or entice to sin, offend. So here in Mt 5:29-30 **skandalizo** is used in the active sense which conveys the idea to cause to do wrong, to entice to commit sin. In the passive sense it means to be led into sin, to be caused to do wrong. In the passive some uses mean to be offended (Mt 11:6), the idea being that one is taking offense at Jesus and/or refusing to believe in Him. Finally, **skandalizo** can mean to furnish an occasion for some to be shocked, angered, or offended (Mt 17:27).

**Swindoll** - The original and most literal meaning is "to spring back and forth" or "to slam closed," as with a spring-loaded animal trap. Therefore, the verb generally means "to close something in." The figurative use of this word is rare outside of Jewish and Christian writings, but not altogether absent. One Greek playwright describes an unjust accuser dragging innocent men into court and "laying traps" with his questions. (Aristophanes, Acharnenses 687) Paul frequently used the corresponding noun (**skandalon**) to describe Jesus as an intellectual and moral trap for any who oppose God and think themselves righteous (Rom. 9:33; 11:9; 1 Cor. 1:23; Gal. 5:11). (Borrow [Insights on John](#))

**R V G Tasker** explains that **skandalizo** or the noun **skandalon** was "used of the spring of a trap which might 'go off' when you were least expecting it..." During the earlier part of His ministry Jesus had spoken comparatively little to His disciples about the persecution which awaited them, because He had been in their company, and as long as He was with them the world's hatred must inevitably be drawn to Himself." (BORROW [The Gospel according to St. John](#) page 180)

**Skandalizo** is derived from **skandalon** which refers to stick in a trap on which the bait is placed and which springs up and shuts the trap at the touch of the careless, unwary animal. It follows that the idea is to put a stumbling block or impediment in one's way, upon which another may trip and fall. Jesus' point is that anything or anyone that morally traps us (by our senses, visual, touch, and by expansion not excluding the other senses such as hearing), and causes us to fall into sin should be eliminated, radically and quickly. If we do not make every necessary effort to control our surroundings, what we watch and read, who we keep company with and speak with, etc, then those things will control us. If you cannot control something, it needs to be "jettisoned" to keep the boat afloat so to speak.

**NIDNTT** - In Classic Literature - The noun **skandalon**, from a root meaning jump up, snap shut, was originally the piece of wood that kept open a trap for animals. Outside the Bible it is not used metaphorically, though its derivative **skandalethron** (e.g. a trap set through questions) is so used. No non-biblical example of **skandalizo** has been found. The Eng. word **scandal** is derived from the noun via the Lat. **scandalum**.

**Carpenter** - This word **skandalizō** means "stumbling block" or "snare." The term refers to the trigger that springs a trap; therefore, "offend" in the New Testament means anything that hinders someone from doing what is right, causes one to sin, or causes someone to fall away from the faith.

**Thayer** - properly, to put a stumbling-block or impediment in the way, upon which another may trip and fall; to be a stumbling-block; in the N. T. always metaphorically, (to cause or make to stumble; to offend (cause to offend)); a. to entice to sin Matt. 5:29- 30; 18:6,8f; Mark 9:42f,45,47; Luke 17:2; 1 Cor. 8:13; passive Latin offendor (to be offended), Vulgate scandalizor, Ro 14:21; 2Co 11:29 (is made to stumble). b. "to cause a person to begin to distrust and desert one whom he ought to trust and obey; to cause to fall away," and in the passive, to fall away - Jn 6:61; passive, Mt. 13:21; 24:10; 26:33; Mk 4:17; 14:29; (Jn 16:1); to be offended in one, (find occasion of stumbling in), i.e. to see in another what I disapprove of and what hinders me from acknowledging his authority: Mt. 11:6; 13:57; 26:31; Mk 6:3; 14:27; Lk 7:23; to cause one to judge unfavorably or unjustly of another, Mt. 17:27. Since the man who

stumbles or whose foot gets entangled feels annoyed, skandalizo means (c) to cause one to feel displeasure at a thing; to make indignant: tina, passive, to be displeased, indignant (offended), Mt. 15:12. The verb skandalizo is found neither in secular authors nor in the Septuagint

**Skandalizo** - 29x in 27v - Usage: cause(1), cause... to stumble(2), causes(2), causes... to stumble(6), fall away(7), falls away(1), led into sin(1), makes... stumble(2), offend(1), offended(1), stumble(3), stumbling(1), take(1), take offense(1), took offense(2).

Matthew 5:29 "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. 30 "If your right hand makes you **stumble**, cut it off 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 go into hell.

**MacArthur:** *Skandalizō* basically means to cause to fall, but in its substantive form, as here (makes ... stumble), it was often used of the bait stick that springs the trap when an animal touches it. Anything that morally or spiritually traps us, that causes us to fall into sin or to stay in sin, should be eliminated quickly and totally. For example, a married person's falling in love with someone besides his or her spouse is wrong. The relationship may be mutually enjoyable and considered to be rewarding, fulfilling, and beautiful. But it is totally sinful and should be immediately severed. What is a pure and truly beautiful relationship between marriage partners is morally ugly and repulsive to God when it is shared between a man and woman if either or both are married to someone else. (MacArthur, J. Matthew. Chicago: Moody Press)

Matthew 11:6 "And blessed is he who does not **take offense** at Me."

**MacArthur:** Stumbling is from *skandalizō*, which originally referred to the trapping or snaring of an animal. It was used metaphorically to signify an entrapment or stumbling block and carried the derived meaning of causing offense. Jesus' divine messiahship and the gospel of deliverance from sin through faith in Him are great stumbling blocks to sinful, unbelieving man, and Jesus did not want John to be affected by the world's skepticism and unbelief.

Matthew 13:21 yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he **falls away**.

**MacArthur:** Falls away is from *skandalizō*, which means to cause to stumble or fall and is the term from which we get scandalize. It is sometimes translated with the idea of causing offense-as in the Authorized Version of this verse. All of those meanings are appropriate here, because the superficial Christian is scandalized, offended, stumbles, and falls away when his faith is put to the test (cf. John 8:31; 1 John 2:19).

Matthew 13:57 And they took **offense** at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his **hometown** and in his own household."

**MacArthur:** Jesus' friends and former neighbors were offended by His claims. They were offended by His ordinary background, by the commonness of His family, the limits of His formal training, His lack of official religious status, and many other irrelevant or secondary issues. (MacArthur, J. Matthew. Chicago: Moody Press)

Matthew 15:12 Then the disciples came and said to Him, "Do You know that the Pharisees were **offended** when they heard this statement?"

Matthew 17:27 "However, so that we do not **offend** them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for you and Me."

Matthew 18:6 but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to **stumble**, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

**MacArthur:** The verb *skandalizō* (to stumble) literally means "to cause to fall," and the Lord is therefore speaking of enticing, trapping, or influencing a believer in any way that leads him into sin or in any way makes it easier for him to sin. A person who is responsible for causing a Christian to sin commits an offense against Christ Himself as well as against the Christian.

Matthew 18:8 "If your hand or your foot causes you to **stumble**, cut it off and throw it from you; it is better for you to enter life crippled or lame, than to have two hands or two feet and be cast into the eternal fire. 9 "If your eye causes you to **stumble**, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery hell.

Matthew 24:10 "At that time many will **fall away** and will betray one another and hate one another.

Matthew 26:31 Then Jesus said to them, "You will all**fall away** because of Me this night, for it is written, 'I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP OF THE FLOCK SHALL BE SCATTERED.'

33 But Peter said to Him, "Even though all**may fall away** because of You, I will never**fall away**."

**MacArthur:** Skandalizō (fall away) is the term from which scandal is derived and has the literal meaning of setting a trap, snare, or stumbling block. In Jesus' day the word most often was used metaphorically, as it always is in the New Testament. Jesus predicted that the disciples would soon confront an obstacle that would make them stumble and fall away from their loyalty to Him.

Mark 4:17 and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they **fall away**.

**Wuest:** The word "offended" is the translation of skandalizō, "to put a stumbling block or impediment in the way upon which one may trip or fall." Thus, to be offended in someone is to find occasion of stumbling in him, to see in another what one disapproves of and what hinders one from acknowledging his authority. Here, those who are like seed sown on ground full of rocks, are offended at the afflictions and persecutions in the sense that they find occasion of stumbling in them since they disapprove of them. Wuest, K. S. (1997, c1984). Wuest's word studies from the Greek New Testament : For the English reader (Mk 4:16). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Mark 6:3 "Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not His sisters here with us?" And they **took offense** at Him.

**Wuest:** The word is skandalizō, "to put a stumbling block or impediment in the way upon which another may trip or fall, to cause a person to begin to distrust one whom he ought to trust and obey"; in a passive sense, "to find occasion of stumbling in a person, to be offended in a person, to see in another what one disapproves of and what hinders one from acknowledging his authority." They could not explain Him, so they rejected Him. The saddest part of all was that His own brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of Mary and Joseph, disbelieved His Messianic claims. They had lived in the same home with Jesus for many years, and had been the recipients of the financial support He brought in to the family coffers by His carpenter work. His singularly beautiful life had made no effective impression upon their dull, cold hearts.

Mark 9:42 "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to**stumble**, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.

43 "If your hand causes you to**stumble**, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire,

45 "If your foot causes you to**stumble**, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than, having your two feet, to be cast into hell,

47 "If your eye causes you to**stumble**, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into hell,

Mark 14:27 And Jesus said to them, "You will all**fall away**, because it is written, 'I WILL STRIKE DOWN THE SHEPHERD, AND THE SHEEP SHALL BE SCATTERED.'

29 But Peter said to Him, "Even though all**may fall away**, yet I will not."

Luke 7:23 "Blessed is he who does not take**offense** at Me."

Luke 17:2 "It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to**stumble**.

John 6:61 But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to**stumble**?

**MacArthur:** Stumble translates a form of the verb skandalizō, which can mean either "to take offense" (e.g., Matt. 13:57; 15:12) or "to give up believing" (e.g., 13:21; 24:10). Both meanings are appropriate here; the false disciples took offense at Jesus' teaching, and that caused them to abandon their superficial faith in Him.

John 16:1 "These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from**stumbling**.

**MacArthur:** Stumbling translates a form of the verb *skandalizō*; the related noun literally refers to the bait stick in a trap. The term here refers figuratively to the disciples' being caught off guard like an animal ensnared in a trap. Had Jesus not warned them of the persecution they would inevitably face, the disciples might have become shocked and disillusioned so that their faith might have faltered.

1 Corinthians 8:13 Therefore, if food causes my brother to **stumble**, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause my brother to **stumble**.

2 Corinthians 11:29 Who is weak without my being weak? Who is **led** into sin without my intense concern?

**William Barclay** adds this comment on the root noun **skandalon** (see word study)...

"The word he uses for a stumbling-block is ... *skandalon*... a form of the word *skandalethron*... the bait-stick in a trap. It was the stick or arm on which the bait was fixed and which operated the trap to catch the animal lured to its own destruction. So the word came to mean anything which causes a man's destruction. Behind it there are two pictures. First, there is the picture of a hidden stone in a path against which a man may stumble, or of a cord stretched across a path, deliberately put there to make a man trip. Second, there is the picture of a pit dug in the ground and deceptively covered over with a thin layer of branches or of turf, and so arranged that, when the unwary traveler sets his foot on it, he is immediately thrown into the pit. The *skandalon*, the stumbling-block is something which trips a man up, something which sends him crashing to destruction, something which lures him to his own ruin... ANYTHING which helps to seduce us to sin is to be ruthlessly rooted out of life. If there is a habit which can be seduction to evil, if there is an association which can be the cause of wrongdoing, if there is a pleasure which could turn out to be our ruin, then that thing must be surgically excised from our life." (Col 3:5, Heb 12:1 "the sin") Coming as it does immediately after the passage which deals with forbidden thoughts and desires, this passage compels us to ask: How shall we free ourselves from these unclean desires and defiling thoughts? It is the fact of experience that thoughts and pictures come unbidden into our minds, and it is the hardest thing on earth to shut the door to them. There is one way in which these forbidden thoughts and desires cannot be dealt with—and that is to sit down and to say, I will not think of these things (cp Col 2:23). The more we say, I will not think of such and such a thing, the more our thoughts are in fact concentrated on it.

The outstanding example in history of the wrong way to deal with such thoughts and desires was the hermits and the monks in the desert in the time of the early Church. They were men who wished to free themselves from all earthly things, and especially of the desires of the body. To do so they went away into the Egyptian desert with the idea of living alone and thinking of nothing but God. The most famous of them all was Saint Anthony. He lived the hermit's life; he fasted; he did without sleep; he tortured his body. For 35 years he lived in the desert, and these 35 years were a non-stop battle, without respite, with his temptations. The story is told in his biography.

*"First of all the devil tried to lead him away from discipline, whispering to him the remembrance of his wealth, cares for his sister, claims of kindred, love of money, love of glory, the various pleasures of the table, and the other relaxations of life, and, at last, the difficulty of virtue and the labor of it. The one would suggest foul thoughts, and the other counter them with prayers; the one fire him with lust, the other, as one who seemed to blush, fortify his body with prayers, faith and fasting. The devil one night even took upon him the shape of a woman, and imitated all her acts simply to beguile Anthony."*

So for thirty-five years the struggle went on. ([Daily Study Bible - online](#)) (Bolding added)

## SPIRIT ENABLED SELF DENIAL

**Tear out** and **throw** are both in the **aorist imperative**, a command from our Lord and Master calling for urgent action. Do this now! It is critically important! Don't hesitate or delay! Deal drastically with anything that predisposes you to sin! We must quickly and ruthlessly deal with ourselves and not encourage the imagination to "feed on" the inward lustful fantasies, the inner desires that can quickly lead to the destructive sin of physical adultery. And remember that every commandment comes "pre-packaged" with God's enablement! Beware of trying to tear out and throw IN YOUR OWN STRENGTH! This is called legalism and it is a road that leads to repeated frustration and failure. The only way to kill sin before it kills you is by relying on God's provision -- the indwelling Holy Spirit. He Alone can give us the desire and power (Php 2:13NLT-[note](#)) to kill sin (Ro 8:13[note](#)).

Even simple logic says that what Jesus is commanding is not a literal action. Why? Would the loss of one eye or one hand prevent

lustful look or thought via the other hand or eye? Of course, not, because the problem is not the eye or the hand. They are morally neutral instruments.

As Paul writes to the Romans

Therefore **do not let sin reign** (command to stop a practice already occurring =[present imperative with a negative](#) - [See discussion of commands and need for the Spirit](#)) in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting (stop an action which is already occurring) the **members of your body** (eyes, hands, ears, etc) to (the) **sin** (refers to the old sin nature still latent in believers) as instruments of unrighteousness; but **present** (aorist imperative enabled [by the Spirit](#)) yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God. For ([term of explanation](#) - What's Paul explaining?) sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under (if you are "under" something, you are "under its power) law, but under grace. (see **notes** Romans 6:12; 6:13; 6:14)

**Peter** gives similar advise...

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to**abstain** (continually hold yourself away from enabled [by the Spirit](#) = present tense, middle voice) from fleshly lusts, which wage war (present tense = continually carry on a military campaign, not just one skirmish but fleshly lusts are personified as a rebel commander carrying out a long-term guerilla campaign with the intent to capture, enslave and destroy) against the soul. (see notes 1 Peter 2:11)

**Tasker** -"Jesus is expressing in metaphorical language the all-important truth that a limited but morally healthy life is better than a wider life which is morally depraved." (The Gospel According to St Matthew)

Commenting on 1 Peter 2:11 **John MacArthur** writes that "because our souls are saved and because we've received a new heart and because we've been washed and because we've been regenerated, there is a newness in us, but as we have noted in the past, it is incarcerated in our unredeemed human flesh. That's why we have a spiritual battle because the new man in us is battling the **flesh**. And the **flesh** is where lust comes from. And so we are called to, literally the Greek word is, "*hold oneself away from fleshly lusts*." Boy, that is tough. That is tough enough because the fleshly lusts are in us, it is especially tough in our society because we live in a pornographic society. And in a pornographic society our fleshly lusts are fed constantly by the visual images of pornography and the verbal expressions of pornography that are all around us all the time. And so for us this is a great challenge for the Holy Spirit in us to give us victory." MacArthur continues in the note (highlight "aliens" for note)."

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**MAKE A DECISION OF YOUR WILL ABOUT WHAT YOU WATCH:** You need to make a conscious decision of what you are going to allow into your life. David gave us a practical example when he declared:

Psalm 101:3 I will set no worthless ([beliyaal](#)) = good for nothing, also used as another name for Satan! cp use of the Hebrew transliteration by Paul in 2Co 6:15+) thing before (Hebrew means directly in front of) my eyes. I hate the work of those who fall away. It shall not fasten ([dabaq](#)= stick like glue, used in Ge 2:24+ for man cleaving to his wife) its grip on me. (Ps 101:3)

**Comment:** What are those **worthless** things? Some are obvious such as R-rated movies, pornography, sensual novels, etc. But what about PG-13 rated movies? You be the judge but are the images and thoughts that are allowed entry into your heart edifying to you as a believer and God glorifying? What about most sitcoms on television today? It's almost impossible to find one that is not filled with sexual innuendo, curse words, off color jokes, etc. What do these things do to the heart? Will the "springs" be clean and unpolluted after exposure to such fare?

**George Hakewill** comments in regard to the phrase **it shall not fasten its grip on me...**

A bird may light upon a man's house; but he may choose whether she shall nestle or breed there, or not: and the devil or his instruments (the fallen world system) may represent a wicked object to a man's sight; but **he may choose** whether he will entertain or embrace it or not. For a man to set wicked things before his eyes is nothing else but to sin of set purpose, to set himself to sin, or to sell himself to sin, as Ahab did, 1 Kings 21:1-29.

**Albert Barnes** warns us...

A wicked plan or purpose is thus represented as having a tendency to fasten itself on a man, or to "stick to him" -- as pitch, or wax, or a burr does.

Here are C H Spurgeon's comments on Ps 101:3:

**I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.** I will neither delight in it, aim at it or endure it. If I have wickedness brought before me by others I will turn away from it (Pr 8:13, Ro 12:9), I will not gaze upon it with pleasure. The psalmist is very sweeping in his resolve, he declines the least, the most reputable, the most customary form of evil -- no wicked thing; not only shall it not dwell in his heart, but not even before his eyes, for what fascinates the eye is very apt to gain admission into the heart, even as Eve's apple first pleased her sight and then prevailed over her mind and hand.

**I hate the work of them that turn aside** He was warmly against it; he did not view it with indifference, but with utter scorn and abhorrence. Hatred of sin is a good sentinel for the door of virtue. There are persons in courts who walk in a very crooked way, leaving the high road of integrity; and these, by short cuts, and twists, and turns, are often supposed to accomplish work for their masters which simple honest hearts are not competent to undertake; but David would not employ such, he would pay no secret service money, he loathed the practices of men who deviate from righteousness. He was of the same mind as the dying statesman who said, "Corruption wins not more than honesty." It is greatly to be deplored that in after years he did not keep himself clear in this matter in every case, though, in the main he did; but what would he have been if he had not commenced with this resolve, but had followed the usual crooked Policy of Oriental princes? How much do we all need divine keeping! We are no more perfect than David, nay, we fall far short of him in many things; and, like him, we shall find need to write a psalm of penitence very soon after our psalm of good resolution.

**It shall not cleave to me.** I will disown their ways, I will not imitate their policy: like dirt it may fall upon me, but I will wash it off, and never rest till I am rid of it. Sin, like pitch, is very apt to stick. In the course of our family history crooked things will turn up, for we are all imperfect, and some of those around us are far from being what they should be; it must, therefore, be one great object of our care to disentangle ourselves, to keep clear of transgression, and of all that comes of it: this cannot be done unless the Lord both comes to us, and abides with us evermore. (cf Ro 8:13+).

### **Eyes for the Worthy**

*(Inspired by Psalm 101:3)*

I will set no worthless thing before my gaze,  
No fleeting shadow, no empty praise.  
For what I behold shapes the heart within,  
Drawing me closer—or leading to sin.

Why dwell on idols that rust and decay?  
Why fix my eyes where temptations play?  
The Lord has called me to things divine,  
To seek what's holy, His truth to find.

The glitter of gold, the lure of the vain,  
Cannot compare to His lasting gain.  
So I turn my eyes from the fleeting show,  
To the light of His love, where blessings flow.

Let my vision rest on what is pure,  
On treasures eternal, steadfast, and sure.  
For the heart follows where the eyes lead,  
Planting the harvest of every seed.

I will fix my sight on the righteous path,  
Shielding my soul from the tempter's wrath.  
With eyes uplifted to heaven's throne,  
I find my joy in Christ alone.

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Psalm 119:37+ **TURN AWAY** (Hiphil = a command; and in the Septuagint, the Greek verb [apostrepho](#) is in the [aorist imperative](#) a plaintive plea to God to DO IT NOW, to give me the power of the Spirit to TURN AWAY. Apostrepho means to cause to change from incorrect to correct behavior) my eyes from looking at **vanity** (Hebrew = shav = futility, worthlessness = that which has no result or use and thus is worthless. Sometimes shav describes an idol, with emphasis on that which is worthless. Shav is translated in Greek [Septuagint] by the word [mataiotes](#) = state of being without use or value and thus that which manifests emptiness, futility, purposelessness, transitoriness), and revive me in Thy ways.

### **Spurgeon Comments:**

Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity. He had prayed about his heart, and one would have thought that the eyes would so surely have been influenced by the heart that there was no need to make them the objects of a special petition; but our author is resolved to make assurance doubly sure. If the eyes do not see, perhaps the heart may not desire: at any rate, one door of temptation is closed when we do not even look at the painted bauble. Sin first entered man's mind by the eye, and it is still a favourite gate for the incoming of Satan's allurements: hence the need of a double watch upon that portal. The prayer is not so much that the eyes may be shut as "turned away"; for we need to have them open, but directed to right objects. Perhaps we are now gazing upon folly, we need to have our eyes turned away; and if we are beholding heavenly things we shall be wise to beg that our eyes may be kept away from vanity. Why should we look on vanity? -- it melts away as a vapour. Why not look upon things eternal? Sin is vanity, unjust gain is vanity, self conceit is vanity, and, indeed, all that is not of God comes under the same head. From all this we must turn away. It is a proof of the sense of weakness felt by the Psalmist and of his entire dependence upon God that he even asks to have his eyes turned for him; he meant not to make himself passive, but he intended to set forth his own utter helplessness apart from the grace of God. For fear he should forget himself and gaze with a lingering longing upon forbidden objects, he entreats the Lord speedily to make him turn away his eyes, hurrying him off from so dangerous a parley with iniquity. If we are kept from looking on vanity we shall be preserved from loving iniquity.

Whatever is of vanity, make me to pass without seeing it. The sentiment is strikingly like that in our Lord's prayer: "Lead us not into temptation." Having prayed for what he wanted to see, the Psalmist here prays for the hiding of what he would not see.

And quicken thou me in thy way. Give me so much life that dead vanity may have no power over me. Enable me to travel so swiftly in the road to heaven that I may not stop long enough within sight of vanity to be fascinated thereby. The prayer indicates our greatest need, -- more life in our obedience. It shows the preserving power of increased life to keep us from the evils which are around us, and it, also, tells us where that increased life must come from, namely, from the Lord alone. Vitality is the cure of vanity. When the heart is full of grace the eyes will be cleansed from impurity. On the other hand, if we would be full of life as to the things of God we must keep ourselves apart from sin and folly, or the eyes will soon captivate the mind, and, like Samson, who could slay his thousands, we may ourselves be overcome through the lusts which enter by the eye.

### **William Cowper on Psalm 119:37:**

By the eyes oftentimes, as by windows, death enters into the heart; therefore to keep the heart in a good estate three things are requisite, First, careful study of the senses, specially of the eyes; for it is a righteous working of the Lord... that he who negligently uses the external eye of his body, should be punished with blindness in the internal eye of his mind. And for this cause Nazianzen, deplored the calamities of his soul, wished that a door might be set before his eyes and ears, to close them when they opened to anything that is not good... The second thing is, a subduing of the body by discipline (cp Titus 2:11, 12, 13+). And the third is, continuance in prayer (Col 4:2+, 1Th 5:17+, Eph 6:18+, Ro 12:12b+).

### **Wolfgang Musculus (1563)**

Notice that he does not say, I will turn away mine eyes; but, "Turn away mine eyes." This shows that it is not possible for us sufficiently to keep by our own caution and diligence; but there must be divine keeping. For, first, where soever in this world you turn yourself, provocations to [commit sin] are met with. Secondly, with the unwary, and with far different persons, the eyes, the servants of a corrupt heart, wander after the things which are the vanities. Thirdly, before you are aware, the evil contracted through eyes creeps in to the inmost recesses of the heart, and [sows] the seeds of perdition (cp Mt 5:29, 30-note). This the Psalmist himself had experienced, not without greatest trouble both of heart and condition.

**Albert Barnes** makes a great (and pragmatic) point that...

An ugly object loses much of its deformity when we look often upon it. Sin follows this general law, and is to be avoided altogether, even in its contemplation, if we would be safe. A man should be thankful in this world that he has eyelids; and as he can close his eyes, so he should often do it.

### **Thomas Manton**

Turn away, then quicken (revive). The first request is for the removing the impediments of obedience, the other

for the addition of new degrees of grace. These two are fitly joined, for they have a natural influence upon one another. Unless we turn away our eyes from vanity, we shall soon contract deadness of heart. Nothing causes it so much as an inordinate liberty in carnal vanities. When our affections are alive to other things, they are dead to God. Therefore the less we let loose our heart to [focus on] these things, the more lively [revived] and cheerful are we in the work of obedience. On the other side, the more the rigour of grace is renewed, and the habits of it quickened into actual exercise, the more is sin mortified and subdued. Sin dieth, and our senses are restored to their proper use.

### **Joseph Caryl**

Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity. That sin may be avoided we must avoid whatsoever leads to or occasions it. As this caused Job (Job 31:1) to covenant strongly with his eyes, so it caused David (Ed: The author of Ps 119 may be David but we cannot be dogmatic) to pray earnestly about his eyes. "Turn away mine eyes (or as the Hebrew may be rendered, make them to pass), from beholding vanity."

The eye is apt to make a stand, or fix itself, when we come in view of an ensnaring object; therefore it is our duty to hasten it away, or to pray that God would make it pass off from it... He that fears burning must take heed of playing with fire: he that fears drowning must keep out of deep waters. He that fears the plague must not go into an infected house. Would they avoid sin who present themselves to the opportunities of it? (Of course not!)

### **John Morison**

Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity. It is a most dangerous experiment for a child of God to place himself (or herself) within the sphere of seductive temptations. Every feeling of duty, every recollection of his own weakness, every remembrance of the failure of others, should induce him to hasten to the greatest possible distance from the scene of unnecessary conflict and danger.

### **William Kay**

Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity. From gazing at the delusive mirages which tempt the pilgrim to leave the safe highway.

### **Charles Bridges**

Is it asked -- "What will most effectually turn my eyes from vanity?" Not the seclusion of contemplative retirement -- not the relinquishment of our lawful connection with the world ["in the world, but not of the world"] -- but the transcendent beauty of Jesus unveiled to our eyes, and fixing our hearts (cp Heb 12:2, Ro 13:14 - put on Jesus).

### **William Seeker (1660)**

Turn away mine eyes, etc. The fort royal of your souls is in danger of a surprise while the outworks of your senses are unguarded. Your eyes, which may be floodgates to pour out tears, should not be casements to let in lusts. A careless eye is an index to a graceless heart. Remember, the whole world died by a wound in the eye. The eyes of a Christian should be like sunflowers, which are opened to no blaze but that of the sun (Son).

### **Matthew Henry**

For restraining grace that he might be prevented and kept back from that which would hinder him in the way of his duty: "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity." For constraining grace, that he might not only be kept from everything that would obstruct his progress heavenward, but that he might have that grace which was necessary to forward him in that progress: "Quicken (revive) thou me in thy way."

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**The Eyegate** - The eyegate opens onto a broad avenue that leads directly to the soul. Through it flow images that can kindle lust, stir up envy, and incite sinful pleasures.

In The Confessions of St. Augustine, the author told of his friend Alypius who, though not a Christian, hated the bloody entertainment of the Roman circus. One day some students forced Alypius into the amphitheater to watch the gladiators. "Though you hale my body to that place," he said, "can you force me also to turn my mind or my eyes to these shows?" So there he sat, eyes closed, mind fixed on nobler things. Just then a frenzied cry arose as a gladiator fell victim to a sword. Alypius opened his eyes for a brief moment. "So soon as he saw the blood," Augustine recorded, "he therewith drank down savageness; nor turned away, but fixed his eye, drinking in frenzy, unawares, and was delighted with that guilty fight, and intoxicated with the bloody pastime."

Our Lord, in a bold figure of speech, said, "if your eye caused you to sin, pluck it out." He didn't mean this to be taken literally. Rather He was saying, in effect, "Take the most drastic action necessary to keep your inner life pure."

*You may not be able to help the first look,  
but you can refuse the second*

Billy Graham once said, "You may not be able to help the first look, but you can refuse the second." When an impure image comes to mind, whether from a book, a magazine, the TV, or real life, never "let the eyes have it." Instead, fix the eyes of your soul on Jesus, who intercedes in heaven for us. He will keep you pure. (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

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**Single Heart, Pure Heart - two songs by Craig Smith** Take a moment to listen to these songs, some of my favorites from Craig Smith,

**Single Heart..**

He had only one aim  
In placing us here  
This is His domain  
And His message is clear.

Single heart, Single mind.  
My eyes forward all the time.  
Single heart, purified.  
Undivided, unified.  
Single heart, Single mind.  
  
May You find in us,  
Solitary trust  
May you find a single heart!

Here is another song **Pure Heart** -- take a moment to ponder your life in light the words sung by Craig Smith and make it your prayer to the Father today:

Over and over I hear it again  
That the Father desires pure heart  
Not to seek earthly treasure or the favor of man  
But to be found with pureness of heart

***Chorus***

***Pure heart is what the Father desires***  
***Holy heart purified by God's holy fire***  
***Broken heart, proven to be faithful and true***  
***Fashion in me a heart that's thirsting for You***

Search every chamber, expose them to me  
Create motives of honor and simplicity  
May you find faithfulness, integrity  
A heart which is worthy for Your eyes to see

***Chorus***

My only ambition is to stand before You  
And find I was pleasing in Your sight  
An obedient child of God, faithful and true  
Found with pureness of heart

***Chorus***

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**Jerry Bridges** writes that...Our minds are mental greenhouses where unlawful thoughts, once planted, are nurtured and watered before being transplanted into the real world of unlawful actions. People seldom fall suddenly into gluttony or immorality. These actions are savored in the mind long before they are enjoyed in reality. The thought life, then, is our first line of defense in the battle of self-control.

The gates to our thought lives are primarily our eyes and our ears. What we see or read or hear largely determines what we think. Memory, of course, also plays a big part in what we think, but our memories only store and feed back what originally comes into our minds through our eyes and ears. Guarding our hearts begins with guarding our eyes and ears. We must not allow that which panders to sexual lust, greed (called materialism in our present society), envy, and selfish ambition to enter our minds. We should avoid television programs, magazine or newspaper articles, advertisements, and conversations that arouse such thoughts. We should not only avoid them, but, to use Paul's words to Timothy, "flee from all this." (Borrow [The Practice of Godliness](#) page 138)

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#### Statistic: Moral Movies

- Percentage of 35- to 64-year-olds who say it is "very or somewhat important" that movies they see reflect their moral and ethical values: 69
- ...of those 18-35: about 58 —Gallup Poll

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**Blind Eyes** - A blind man was once asked if he had no desire that his sight should be restored to him; he answered boldly, "No; because Jesus says, 'If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out.' God probably saw that mine eyes would offend me, so as to endanger my soul, and so He has prevented this great evil, by plucking them out Himself; and I thank Him for it."

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Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. Costly grace... is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble, it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him. —Dietrich Bonhoeffer

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It is greater work to resist vices and passions than to sweat in physical toil. He who does not overcome small faults (Ed: But even these "small" ones enabled by the indwelling Spirit!), shall fall little by little into greater ones. **THOMAS À KEMPIS**

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**Victor Kuligin** - Sexual sins are sadly common in the body of Christ. While we rarely revel in them like the immoral brother in Corinth did (1 Cor. 5:1-13), they are present. In a society that saturates us with sexual images, too many believers have fallen prey to this effective tactic of Satan. There are few drives of human nature more powerful than the sexual drive. Unfortunately, with the growth of technology has come the greater ability to slake the thirst of this beast than ever before. The lust of the eyes can be satisfied via rented videos, pornographic software and magazines that seem ubiquitous, and now most effectively by means of the Internet. In the past, virtually all ways of meeting the urges of this monster involved looking someone else in the eye, either when buying a magazine over the counter or in renting a video. For some people, getting over the hurdle of that embarrassment was enough to keep them from the sin. But today a person can sit in the privacy of his or her own home and indulge in these "pleasures" without ever having to account to anyone else. The insidious lie in this is that we can fool ourselves into believing that no one is getting hurt; but we forget Paul's injunction concerning sexual sin: "All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body" (1 Cor. 6:18b). We primarily destroy ourselves whenever we sin sexually!!! When Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount that we must pluck out our eye if it causes us to sin, it was no mistake that this command followed his comments on adultery. In fact, if we recognize the progression in that teaching, Jesus noted that adultery starts in the heart, but can rapidly move to the eyes and then the hands. This provides us with valuable insight into how to fight and conquer this beast.

In chapter 1, I noted that material poverty is a means to spiritual poverty. Specifically, if we can curb our natural urge for food via the exercise of fasting, we can learn to better control other natural impulses. In chapter 3, we looked at areas of commitment, one involving the mind. What we dwell upon in our minds will ultimately bear fruit in our actions. For example, too many people believe the lie that they can look at pornography, and it will end there. It will not lead to greater evils. But what addict of pornography can honestly say his addiction did not first begin with a small, seemingly harmless glance? We foolishly believe that we can open the door for Satan just a crack, and it will remain there, but Satan will certainly not be satisfied with standing out in the hallway peeking in. He will only be content when he is fully standing in the room with us. Not only is this spiritually foolish reasoning, but it does not even stand up to worldly wisdom. It is clear that people who were promiscuous before marriage have a much higher chance of becoming adulterers than those who remained chaste before marriage. Rarely does Satan hit us squarely between the eyes with the grossest of sins. He prefers to tempt us in more subtle ways, and before we know it, we have done things we would never have dreamt of doing a short time earlier. **What do we allow our eyes to dwell upon?** If I see a pretty woman walking down the street, my eyes might naturally gaze for a moment at her. If my gaze ends there, then I have not sinned. But if I decide to take a further, longer look to absorb all the details, and further, if I begin to dwell on those details in my mind and allow myself to dream unmentionable thoughts, I have committed adultery in my heart. Once I allow such things to enter my heart, it may be a short time before they seep into my mind on a regular basis. Once my mind has become corrupted, my actions will soon follow. For evil

thoughts will hold sway in us just so long as they are hidden in the heart. John Cassian (360-435)

David Robinson, the MVP basketball center who played over a decade for the San Antonio Spurs, set an example in this regard that other Christians should note. Whenever the scantily-clad cheerleaders for the Spurs came onto the court to dance, Robinson stared down at his feet. He said he did this for two reasons: to honor and respect his wife and to guard himself from temptation. This is wisdom we should all take to heart. Let us not also make the mistake of thinking that sexual sin only involves raw lust. In many instances, the driving force of sexual sin is not lust but pride. We are flattered that others find us attractive, and often we can allow this to go to our heads. Everyone enjoys adulation, especially if it involves how we look. The woman who feels neglected by her husband, or the man who has reached an age where attracting younger women means he still has "it," can be driven more by ego than lust. We must crucify the sexual self. We must make our bodies our slaves, not allow them to enslave us with their passions and urges. Such crucifixion begins with our eyes, just as much temptation does. Strict self-control in what we allow ourselves to look at will go a long way in guarding us from sexual sin. (From [Ten Things I Wish Jesus Never Said](#) – Victor Kuligin)

#### Related Resource:

- Luke 14:28 Commentary

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What makes sex online far more compelling than any shrink-wrapped smut [is] instant gratification in endless variety—you never get to the end of the magazine and have to start looking at the same pictures again. With old porn, once you view it, you've consumed it. You've chewed the flavor out of the gum. This can't be done on the Net. The gum never runs out of flavor. A new piece of flesh waits behind every old one, and expectation bids you to go further. Much further. Because as long as there's more to come, you'll keep looking. This is all so new. No stimulus like this ever existed before. —Greg Gutfeld,

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In his provocative book, *Reclaiming Surrendered Ground*, author and biblical counselor Jim Logan debunks the myth that ""private"" sexual habits such as pornography are basically harmless because no one else is involved. Many men who use pornography buy into this false and dangerous argument. Logan cites Scripture and examples from his counseling ministry which show that practicing sexual lust leads to spiritual bondage which can have devastating effects on a person's marriage and family relationships.

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**An Illustration that Warrants a Caveat** - "Suppose that on a solo outing you set up camp. Exploring the surrounding area, you stumble onto a deep pit. At the bottom, lying half dead, is a huge black bear, too weak to even lift his head. His sad look says, "Please, get me something to drink." Feeling sorry, you run to your campsite and get a bucket of water and a rope. You gently lower the bucket where the bear can drink from it. The next morning, checking on your wild friend, you find him standing but still very weak. So you run back to the campsite, fetch some food and lower it to him. That night you hear noises outside your tent. The next morning you discover that all your food has been eaten. You immediately check on the pit and find it empty. That night, under cover of darkness, the bear you fed comes back—and devours you. What is the moral? The only way to control our flesh, especially in the area of sexual addiction, is to starve it to death. Each time we feed it with lustful thoughts or pornographic images we strengthen it, making it that much more difficult to resist the next time." (6000 Plus Illustrations - Jeff Carroll)

**Editorial Caveat**- While there is certainly some truth in this illustration, ultimately it's solution is in error and serious error at that. The statement "*The only way to control our flesh, especially in the area of sexual addiction, is to starve it to death!*" is the problem. Why? Because the only way to "**control our flesh**" is for the Spirit to enable us to do so (cp Gal 5:23[note](#) which describes the supernatural fruit of self-control). Yes, we are still responsible for not clicking the mouse to a seductive webpage, but ultimately it is the Spirit Who gives us the desire and the power to not carry out the lust of the flesh - see Gal 5:16[note](#) which clearly shows the way to absolutely not carry out the desire of the flesh is to "walk by the Spirit!" Note Paul's emphasis is first on the Holy Spirit! Do not invert the order! Not clicking that mouse to some forbidden site is **NOT** walking by the Spirit, but it is **ENABLED** by walking by the Spirit. Do you see the critical distinction? There is huge difference in the emphasis. If we focus on "starve it to death" we focus on OUR innate, intrinsic self will-power. Listen, you might experience a modicum of success for a day or a week or a month, but the only way to experience real success (aka "victory" over sin that so easily entangles you) is by learning daily to cast off self-reliance and instead to rely wholly upon the Holy Spirit. This is not the same as the erroneous teaching "*Let go and let God!*" That is not Scripturally sound. It is more accurate to say "*Let God and let's go.*" It is a "dual effort" in one sense (but even that is not totally accurate because left to ourselves we would never continually initiate the effort if the Spirit did not give us the desire to do so! In short, fallen flesh will never cast out flesh!). So be careful when someone tells you that you have two dogs in you and the one who dominates is the one you feed. It sounds reasonable but it is not entirely Biblical.

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#### The Cost of the Kingdom

(Inspired by Matthew 18:8-9)

If your hand should lead you to sin,  
Cut it off, let new life begin.  
Better to walk with one hand whole,  
Than to lose forever your precious soul.

If your foot should tread the path of wrong,  
Turn away, where you don't belong.  
Better to limp to heaven's gate,  
Than to dance to hell and seal your fate.

And if your eye should tempt your heart,  
Pluck it out; let sin depart.  
For it's better to enter the kingdom blind,  
Than to see and leave eternal life behind.

These words are harsh, yet truth they bear,  
The cost of sin is beyond compare.  
No earthly limb or fleeting sight,  
Can outweigh the gift of heaven's light.

So guard your steps, your hands, your gaze,  
Let holiness guide all your days.  
For the path is narrow, the journey steep,  
But eternal joy is yours to keep.

**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:** sumpherei (3SPAI) gar soi ina apoletai (3SAMS) en ton melon sou kai me olon to soma sou blethe (3SAPS) eis geennan

- Mt 16:26; Proverbs 5:8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:24,25
- [Matthew 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Matthew 5:27-30: Who is an Adulterer? 1 - Study Guide](#) - dropdown - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 5:27-30: Who is an Adulterer? 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 5:27-30: Who is an Adulterer? 2 - Study Guide](#) - dropdown - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 5:27-30: Who is an Adulterer? 2](#) - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 5:29-30: Man's Biggest Problem - Study Guide](#) - dropdown - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 5:29-30: Man's Biggest Problem](#) - John MacArthur

#### Related Passages:

Colossians 3:5+ Therefore **consider** ([aorist imperative](#) see [our need to depend on the Holy Spirit to obey](#)) the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

Romans 8:13+ for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death (present tense - direction, not perfection) the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

## A HOT PLACE YOU WANT TO AVOID

**For** - Always pause and ponder this important **term of explanation** - it will usually force you to re-read the previous section. What is Jesus' explaining?

*What lust is so sweet or profitable that is worth burning in hell for?*

--Puritan William Gurnall

**it is better for you to lose ([apollumi](#)) one of the parts of your body, than for your whole ([holos](#)) body to go into hell ([gehenna](#) -**

aka "the Lake of fire") - In short and to the point, temporal physical loss is better than eternal spiritual loss! Losing a body part does not merit heaven, nor does it keep one from hell. He is speaking of the "high cost" of sin and the need to count the cost or forever suffer with the loss! What Jesus calls for is radical action. It is a matter of direction, not perfection. Jesus is not expecting perfection in this lifelong battle with lust, but He does expect believers as the practice of their life to be killing sin lest it be killing them (Romans 8:13+, Colossians 3:5+). Some days we are better at killing sin than other days, but when we fall (which we will), then, enabled by His Spirit (Php 2:13NLT+ = giving us the desire and the power), we choose to get back up and continue to fight our [intractable, inveterate](#), unyielding mortal enemies the [world](#), the [flesh](#) and the [devil](#), especially the powerful internal enemy the [flesh](#).

**Remember** the axiomatic truth...

Sow a thought and reap an act.

Sow an act and reap a habit.

Sow a habit and reap a character.

Sow a character and reap a destiny.

**Message?** Take the lustful (lust filled) thoughts waging war against your soul (1Pe 2:11+) captive to the obedience of Christ your Lord (cp 2 Cor 10:5+). It is better to turn than to burn!

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**Hell (Gehenna)** (1067) (**geenna** from Hebrew **gay** = valley + **Hinnom** = a deep narrow ravine south of Jerusalem once associated with the pagan god Moloch and his disgusting rite of infant sacrifices [cp modern practice of abortion!], 2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chr 28:3; 33:6; Jer 7:31, 19:5-6, 32:35; Ezekiel 16:20; 23:37 clearly prohibited by God in Lev 18:21, 20:2-5) is literally the **valley of Hinnom**, the valley where the filth and dead animals of the city were cast out and burned and where there were trash fires and perpetually burning rubbish, all a fit symbol of the future home of all unrepentant, unregenerate wicked men and women. It was a foul, forbidding place where the fire, smoke, and stench never ceased. It is thus fitting that gehenna is where sin and unrepentant sinners will one day find it's "resting place".

Good men avoid sin from the love of virtue (2 Co 5:9[note](#), Gal 1:10[note](#), cp 1 Pe 1:17[note](#)). See [Thomas Chalmers](#)' powerful and practical message on how we are to "be killing sin or it will be killing" us (John Owen) "[Expulsive Power of a New Affection](#)"

Saying **YES** to God means saying **NO** to things that offend His holiness.—A. Morgan Derham

Wicked men avoid sin from a fear of punishment.

Although I am taking Edmund Burke's famous saying completely out of context, the principle is "spot on" - "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." In other words, our natural (in Adam) tendency is to gravitate toward fleshly indulgence and if we do nothing evil will triumph. We must daily seek the filling of the empowering Spirit, so that He enables us to control our eyes and our hands and in this way "good" (God's Spirit) will triumph over evil ("deeds of the flesh"). As Paul said "if **by the Spirit** (God's provision) you are **putting to death** (My responsibility- see [100/100](#)) the deeds of the body, you will live." (Romans 8:13-[note](#))

It is said (although not every historical record concurs) that the Early Church Father, [Origen](#), took this command **literally** and had himself castrated. Whether true or not, clearly that is not what Jesus is calling for! The trouble with a **literal** interpretation is that it does not go far enough! Even if you did cut off your hand or gouge out your eye, you could still sin with your other hand or eye. When all those are gone, you can still sin in your mind! Paul spoke to this principle in his warning to the saints at Colossae (warning against men who were saying you [self-abasement](#) was a way to achieve holiness)

These (referring to Col 2:21, 22[note](#)) are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of (absolutely) no value against fleshly indulgence (satisfying one's desires!). (Colossians 2:23[note](#))

Comment: Too often chapter breaks give the misleading sense that the writer is changing subjects, so in the present context, do not miss Paul's solution to conquering "fleshly indulgence" -- first, notice that he is saying these *fleshly activities* cannot control *fleshly desires*, but he goes on to say that there is a way and that way is by fixing our eyes on Jesus (Col 3:1-[note](#), Col 3:2-[note](#)) (See discussion of "[Vertical Vision](#)"). It is the same principle of Chalmer's sermon above. Kill the bad by focusing on the good (but even that being enabled by the Holy Spirit, not fleshly will-power!) (See "[Paradoxical Principle of 100% Dependent and 100% Responsible](#) - [100/100](#)).

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**QUESTION - [What is Gehenna?](#)**

**ANSWER** - The word *gehenna* is the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew *ge-hinnom*, meaning "Valley of [the sons of] Hinnom." This

valley south of Jerusalem was where some of the ancient Israelites “passed children through the fire” (sacrificed their children) to the Canaanite god Molech (2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6; Jeremiah 7:31; 19:2–6). The place is called “[Tophet / Topheth](#)” in Isaiah 30:33. In later years, Gehenna continued to be an unclean place used for burning trash from the city of Jerusalem. Jesus used Gehenna as an illustration of hell.

God so despised the [false god Molech](#) that He explicitly forbade the Israelites from having anything to do with him in [Leviticus 18:21](#). He even warned them of the impending judgment He would send their way if the Jews didn’t keep their attention and worship directed toward Him. In another prophetic warning, God re-named the Valley of Hinnom as the Valley of Slaughter (Jeremiah 19).

But the Israelites didn’t listen, and evil kings of Judah such as Ahaz used the Valley of Hinnom for their demonic practices (2 Chronicles 28:3). To punish Judah, God brought Babylon against them, and that pagan nation carried out His judgment against Judah’s idolatry and rebellion. It wasn’t until after 70 years of exile that the Jews were allowed back into Israel to rebuild. Upon their return the Valley of Slaughter was re-purposed from a place of infanticide to an ever-burning rubbish heap (2 Kings 23:10). Child sacrifice and other forms of idol-worship ceased in Israel. Gehenna became a place where corpses of criminals, dead animals, and all manners of refuse were thrown to be destroyed.

The Gehenna Valley was thus a place of burning sewage, burning flesh, and garbage. [Maggots and worms](#) crawled through the waste, and the smoke smelled strong and sickening (Isaiah 30:33). It was a place utterly filthy, disgusting, and repulsive to the nose and eyes. Gehenna presented such a vivid image that Christ used it as a symbolic depiction of hell: a place of [eternal torment](#) and constant uncleanness, where the fires never ceased burning and the worms never stopped crawling (Matthew 10:28; Mark 9:47–48).

Because of Jesus’ symbolic use of Gehenna, the word *gehenna* is sometimes used as a synonym for *hell*. In fact, that’s how the Greek word is translated in Mark 9:47: “hell.” The occupants of the lake of fire/gehenna/hell are [separated from God](#) for all of eternity. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### QUESTION - [What does it mean that hell is eternal separation from God?](#)

**ANSWER** - The Bible is clear that there are (**ED: ONLY!**) two possible destinations for every human soul following physical death: [heaven](#) or [hell](#) (Matthew 25:34, 41, 46; Luke 16:22–23). Only the righteous inherit eternal life, and the only way to be declared righteous before God is through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (John 3:16–18; Romans 10:9). The souls of the righteous go directly into the presence of God (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23).

For those who do not receive Jesus Christ as Savior, death means everlasting punishment (2 Thessalonians 1:8–9). This punishment is described in a variety of ways: a lake of fire (Luke 16:24; Revelation 20:14–15), outer darkness (Matthew 8:12), and a prison (1 Peter 3:19), for example. This place of punishment is eternal (Jude 1:13; Matthew 25:46). There is no biblical support for the notion that after death people get another chance to repent. Hebrews 9:27 makes it clear that everyone dies physically and, after that, comes the judgment. Christians have already been judged and sentenced. Jesus took that sentence upon Himself. Our sin becomes His and His righteousness becomes ours when we believe in Him. Because He took our just punishment, we need not fear ever being separated from Him again (Romans 8:29–30). The judgment for unbelievers is still to come.

2 Thessalonians 1:8–9 says, “He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might.” The misery of hell will consist of not only physical torture, but the agony of being cut off from every avenue of happiness. God is the source of all good things (James 1:17). To be cut off from God is to forfeit all exposure to anything good. Hell will be a state of perpetual sin; yet those suffering there will possess full understanding of sin’s horrors. Remorse, guilt, and shame will be unending, yet accompanied by the conviction that the punishment is just.

There will no longer be any deception about the “goodness of man.” To be separated from God is to be forever shut off from light (1 John 1:5), love (1 John 4:8), joy (Matthew 25:23), and peace (Ephesians 2:14) because God is the source of all those good things. Any good we observe in humanity is merely a reflection of the character of God, in whose image we were created (Genesis 1:27).

While the spirits of those regenerated by God’s Holy Spirit will abide forever with God in a perfected state (1 John 3:2), the opposite is true of those in hell. None of the goodness of God will exist in them. Whatever good they may have thought they represented on earth will be shown for the selfish, lustful, idolatrous thing it was (Isaiah 64:6). Man’s ideas of goodness will be measured against the perfection of God’s holiness and be found severely lacking. Those in hell have forever lost the chance to see God’s face, hear His voice, experience His forgiveness, or enjoy His fellowship. To be forever separated from God is the ultimate punishment. [GotQuestions.org](#)

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#### Related Resource:

- Study on Eternal Punishment
- See another study on Gehenna, the Lake of fire

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In his excellent tract [Thoughts for Young Men](#), the pithy evangelical writer, **J C Ryle** (1816-1900 - [read a short biography](#)) has the following "thoughts" relative to Jesus' warning about what we look at...

**Another danger to young men is the LOVE OF PLEASURE.**

Youth is the time when our passions are strongest--and like unruly children, cry most loudly for indulgence. Youth is the time when we have generally our most health and strength: death seems far away, and to enjoy ourselves in this life seems to be everything. Youth is the time when most people have few earthly cares or anxieties to take up their attention. And all these things help to make young men think of nothing except pleasure.

"I serve lusts and pleasures:" that is the true answer many a young man should give, if asked, "Whose Servant are you?"

Young men, time would not permit me to tell you all the fruits this love of pleasure produces, and all the ways in which it may do you harm. Why should I speak of carousing, partying, drinking, gambling, movie-going, dancing, and the like? There are few to be found who don't know something of these things by bitter experience. And these are only instances. All things that give a feeling of excitement for the time--all things that drown thought, and keep the mind in a constant whirl--all things that please the senses and delight the flesh--these are the sort of things that have mighty power at your time of life, and they owe their power to the love of pleasure. Be on your guard. Do not be like those of whom Paul speaks, "Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (see note 2 Timothy 3:4).

**Remember what I say: if you would cling to earthly pleasures--these are the things which murder souls. There is no surer way to get a seared conscience and a hard heart towards the things of God, than to give way to the desires of the flesh and mind. It seems like nothing at first, but it tells in the long run.**

Consider what Peter says:

Abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul (see note 1 Peter 2:11)

They destroy the soul's peace, break down its strength, lead it into captivity, and make it a slave.

Consider what Paul says:

**Put to death**, (aorist imperative = command to carry this out now! conveys a sense of urgency!) therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed" (see note Colossians 3:5)

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires (see note Galatians 5:24).

Once the body was a perfect home for a soul--now it is all corrupt and disordered, and needs constant watching. It is a burden to the soul--not a helper; a hindrance--not an assistance. It may become a useful servant, but it is always a bad master.

Consider, again, the words of Paul:

**Clothe** (aorist imperative = command to carry this out now! conveys a sense of urgency!) yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and **do not think** (present imperative + negative = stop doing this!) about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature" (see note Romans 13:14)

"These," says Leighton, "are the words, the very reading of which gave Augustine a great conviction of heart, causing an immoral young man to be turned into a faithful servant of Jesus Christ."

Young men, I wish this might be the case with all of you.

Remember, again, if you cling to earthly pleasures, they will all be unsatisfying, empty, and pointless. Like the locusts of the vision in Revelation, they seem to have crowns on their heads: but like the same locusts, you will find they have stings--real stings--in their tails. All that glitters is not gold. All that tastes sweet is not good. All that pleases for a while is not real pleasure.

Go and take your fill of earthly pleasures if you will--you will never find your heart satisfied with them. There will always be a voice within, crying, like the leech in Proverbs 30:15,

**"Give! Give!"**

There is an empty place there, which nothing but God can fill. You will find, as Solomon did by experience, that earthly pleasures are but a meaningless show--promising contentment but bringing a dissatisfaction of spirit--gold plated caskets, exquisite to look at on the outside, but full of ashes and corruption within. Be wise in your youth.

Write the word "**poison**" on all earthly pleasures. The most lawful of them must be used in moderation. All of them are soul-destroying if you give them your heart. Pleasure, must first have the guarantee that it is not sinful--then it is to be enjoyed in moderation.

**And I will not shrink from warning all young men to remember the seventh commandment; to beware of adultery and sexual immorality, of all impurity of every kind.**

I fear that we don't very often speak on this part of God's law. But when I see how prophets and Apostles have dealt with this subject, when I observe the open way in which the Reformers of our own Church denounced it, when I see the number of young men who walk in the wicked footsteps of Reuben, and Hophni, and Phinehas, and Amnon, I for one cannot, with a good conscience, hold my peace. The world becomes more wicked because of our failure to teach and preach on this commandment. For my own part, I feel it would be false and unscriptural delicacy, in addressing men, not to speak of that which is preeminently the "young man's sin."

The violation of the seventh commandment is the sin above all others, that, as Hosea says,

"takes away the understanding" (Hosea 4:11).

It is the sin that leaves deeper scars upon the soul than any other sin that a man can commit. It is a sin that destroys thousands of young men in every age, and has even overthrown a few of the saints of God in the past. Samson and David are fearful proofs. It is the sin that man dares to smile at, and smoothes over using the terms: thrills, love, uncontrollable passions, and natural desires. But it is the sin that the devil rejoices over, for he is the "unclean spirit;" and it is the sin that God abhors, and declares He "will judge" (see note Hebrews 13:4).

Young men, "**Flee** (present imperative = command to keep on fleeing for we never will outgrow the need to obey this important command) from sexual immorality" (1Cor 6:18) if you love life.

**Let no one deceive** (present imperative with a negative commands them to stop an action already in progress or forbidding of a continuation of being deceived) you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient (Eph 5:6-note).

Flee from the opportunity of it--from the company of those who might draw you into it--from the places where you might be tempted to do it. Read what our Lord says about it in Matthew 5:28,

I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Be like the holy servant Job:

I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl" (Job 31:1)

Flee from talking about it. It is one of the things that ought not even be hinted about in conversation (Eph 5:12-note). You cannot even touch black grease without getting your hands dirty (see powerful illustration of the life of the ermine). Flee from the thoughts of it; resist them, destroy them, pray against them--make any sacrifice rather than give way to them. Imagination is the hotbed where this sin is too often hatched. Guard your thoughts, and there will be little fear about your actions.

**Consider the caution I have been giving. If you forget everything else, do not let this be forgotten.**(J. C. Ryle. Thoughts for Young Men)

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**Adrian Rogers** (see [sermon on Hebrews 4:12 page 106](#)) - Mt 18:8 - Do you think He was speaking literally? Do you think if you cut off your hand it would make you any more spiritual? No, what our Lord is saying here is this: You let the Word of God cut out of your life those things that offend. What He is saying is that if there is something cancerous in you, some work of your hand, some place that you attend, let the Holy Spirit of God remove it, so that healing and health may begin. Thank God for the sharpness, the sharpness of His Word.

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**Stay out of Temptation** - On the TV show Hee Haw, Doc Campbell is confronted by a patient who says he broke his arm in two places. The doc replies, "Well then, stay out of them places!" He may have something there. We cannot regularly put ourselves in the face of temptation and not be affected. When faced with the problem of temptation, we need to take the good doctor's advice and "stay out of them places."

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**JOHN OF THE CROSS** - However small an attachment may be, do not be too confident that you can cut it off at any time, but cut it off at once: for if you do not have the courage to destroy it when it is but beginning, how can you presume upon success when it has taken root and grown?

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#### **J I Packer - MATTHEW 18:8**

*Mortifying sin, however painful,  
is a necessity for life in Christ.*

While surrendering sins into which you drifted casually is not so hard, mortifying what the Puritans called besetting sins—dispositional sins to which your temperament inclines you, and habitual sins that have become addictive and defiant—is regularly a long-drawn-out, bruising struggle. No one who is a spiritual realist will ever pretend otherwise. It is a matter of negating, wishing dead, and laboring to thwart inclinations, cravings, and habits that have been in you for a long time. Pain and grief, moans and groans, will certainly be involved, for your sin does not want to die, nor will it enjoy the killing process. Jesus told us, very vividly, that mortifying a sin could well feel like plucking out an eye or cutting off a hand or foot, in other words, self-mutilation. You will feel you are saying good-bye to something that is so much part of you that without it you cannot live. [Knowing God's Purpose For Your Life](#)

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**Kill The Spider!** - We sometimes have mixed feelings about our sins. We are afraid of being hurt by them, and we want to be forgiven. But we aren't sure we want to be rid of them right now.

A man told me he has a bad habit that is hindering his fellowship with God and hurting his Christian testimony. He says he prays that God will forgive him for his addiction—but he doesn't stop. He reminds me of the story about the man who often went forward at the end of church services to kneel and pray, "Lord, take the cobwebs out of my life." One Sunday morning his pastor, tired of hearing the same old prayer, knelt beside him and cried out, "Lord, kill the spider!"

Yes, sometimes it takes radical action to break a sinful habit. We need to do more than ask God for cleansing each time we succumb to temptation. We must take whatever steps are needed to get the cobwebs out of our life. We must confess our sin and determine to be done with it. Then we must feed our mind with God's Word and do all we can to stay away from the people and places that tempt us to sin. That's what Christ meant when He said, "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out" (Matthew 5:29).

Kill the spider and you'll get rid of the cobwebs. —H V Lugt ([Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI](#).  
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It's not enough to say to God,  
"I'm sorry, I repent,"  
And then go on from day to day  
The way I always went. —Anon.

**Admitting sin is no substitute for quitting sin.**

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**Sinning In Moderation?** - A magazine advertisement for the MTV special The Seven Deadly Sins carried this line: "Lust: Where would we be without it?" A popular radio and television personality said that greed can be good because it makes capitalism work well. An MTV commentator said, "A little lust, pride, sloth, and gluttony--in moderation--are fun, and that's what keeps your heart beating."

Gluttony in moderation? That's doubletalk. How can we practice excess in moderation? Moderation is a virtue, but it can never apply to an action that is immoral.

There may be nothing wrong with eating some goodies, especially those marked "lite," "cholesterol free," or "low calorie." But there is no such thing as "light lust" or "low-calorie greed." Lust, greed, or sin of any kind and in any amount is always wrong.

Christians who are serious about pleasing the Lord will continually examine and judge their inner thoughts and motives. They'll confess and repent of greed as a motive for making more and more money. And they'll work at disciplining their thoughts and actions.

Enjoy a few "lite" desserts. But don't fall for the idea that a little sinning is all right if done in moderation. --H V Lugt

O Lord, help us to recognize  
When we begin to compromise;  
And give us strength to follow through  
With what we know is right and true. --Sper

**Moderation in sin is no more possible  
than moderation in death.**

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#### **Walter Kaiser - Pluck Out Your Eye? - [Hard Sayings of the Bible](#)**

This saying is not so hard in the NIV form as it is in some older versions. The KJV says, "If thy right eye offend thee ...," which is generally meaningless to readers today; the verb offend no longer means "trip up" or anything like that, which in literary usage it still did in 1611. Less excusable is the ERV rendering, "If thy right eye causeth thee to stumble ...," because this introduced an archaism which in 1881 was long since obsolete.

The NIV rendering, however, is more intelligible. It means, in effect: "Don't let your eye lead you into sin." How could it do that? By resting too long on an object of temptation. Matthew places this saying immediately after Jesus' words about adultery in the heart, and that is probably the original context, for it provides a ready example of how a man's eye could lead him into sin. In the most notable case of adultery in the Old Testament—King David's adultery with the wife of Uriah the Hittite—the trouble began when, late one afternoon, David from his palace roof saw the woman bathing (2 Sam 11:2). Jesus says, "Better pluck out your eye—even your right eye (as being presumably the more precious of the two)—than allow it to lead you into sin; it is better to enter into eternal life with one eye than to be thrown into Gehenna (as a result of that sin) with two."

Matthew follows up this saying about the right eye with a similar one about the right hand. This strong assertion seems to have stayed with the hearers; it is repeated in Matthew 18:8–9 (in dependence on Mk 9:43–48), where the foot is mentioned in addition to the eye and the hand.

Shortly after the publication of William Tyndale's English New Testament, the attempt to restrict its circulation was defended on the ground that the simple reader might mistakenly take such language literally and "pluck out his eyes, and so the whole realm will be full of blind men, to the great decay of the nation and the manifest loss of the King's grace; and thus by reading of the Holy Scriptures will the whole realm come into confusion." So a preaching friar is said to have declared in a Cambridge sermon; but he met his match in Hugh Latimer, who, in a sermon preached the following Sunday, said that simple people were well able to distinguish between literal and figurative terms. "For example," Latimer went on, "if we paint a fox preaching in a friar's hood, nobody imagines that a fox is meant, but that craft and hypocrisy are described, which so often are found disguised in that garb." (Hugh Latimer, Sermon preached in St. Edward's Church, Cambridge, in 1529, quoted in J. P. Smyth, *How We Got Our Bible* (1885; London: Religious Tract Society, 1938), p. 102.)

In fact, it is not recorded that anyone ever mutilated himself because of these words in the Gospels. There is indeed the case of Origen, but if the story is true that he made himself a eunuch "for the kingdom of heaven's sake," that was in response to another saying, at which we shall look later.

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The cartoon depicted a frustrated father changing a flat tire in the rain. His two children were peering out the car window. In response to their complaining, he said, "Don't you understand? This is life. This is what's happening. We can't switch to another channel!" Television and reality—does the former distort the latter? After 10 years of research, media analyst Kenneth Curtis measured TV's impact on society. He concluded that the omnipresent, flickering screen constantly tries to tell us what behavior and attitudes are desirable. He described the effect of TV as a subtle process that has become a significant force in defining reality. If this is true, we had better be careful about what we watch. The networks are not committed to portraying Christian values. Many things that are presented as acceptable are in fact dangerous. Furthermore, watching TV makes us passive observers rather than active participants in solving life's problems. The violence, sex, and materialism on TV can make us insensitive to our calling as Christians to be salt and light in a sinful world.

Only as we meditate on God's Word (Psalm 1:2) can we have the right perspective. To avoid a distorted view of life, we must allow God's truth to define reality. —M R De Haan II

Our thoughts are shaped by what we see,  
And thoughts affect our soul;  
So if we'd profit from TV,  
We must be in control. —DJD

**Matthew 5:29,30**  
**The Necessity of Mortifying Every Sin**  
**Charles Simeon**

MANY of the precepts of our holy religion are so strict, that persons indisposed to obey them are ready to turn away from them in despair, exclaiming, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" But must we on that account keep back the truth, or lower the commands of God to the habits and inclinations of men? Must we not rather "declare the whole counsel of God," and enforce to the uttermost the authority of his word? Our blessed Lord has set us an example in this respect; an example which all his servants must follow. He had declared, that an impure look was, in God's estimation, constructive adultery. To this it might be objected, that our constitution, rather than our will, was chargeable with this offence. But our Lord shuts out at once all objections of this kind, by saying, that even a right eye or a right hand must be parted with, rather than that we should suffer them to lead us to the commission of any sin; and that, if we refuse to sacrifice any thing for his sake, eternal misery will be our merited and inevitable portion.

In his words there are two things to be noticed:

**I. The alternative proposed**— It is here supposed, that we have, both within us and without, many things which may operate as incitements to sin. And experience proves that this is really the case: there is not a faculty of our minds, or a member of our bodies, which may not become an occasion of evil; nor is there any thing around us which may not administer fuel to the flames of corruption that are within us. Beauty has a tendency to create unhallowed desires; splendour, to call forth envy and ambition; and plenty, to promote intemperance.

But our Lord sets before us an alternative, either to turn away from those things which are occasions of evil, or to suffer the displeasure of an angry God in hell.

Now this is,

**1. An only alternative**—[Nothing less will suffice on our part; nor will any diminution of punishment be admitted on God's part. It is to no purpose to urge, that the evil disposition which we harbour is but small, or that it is in a manner necessary to our happiness: if it is as dear as a right eye, or as necessary as a right hand, it must be sacrificed. Nor is there any intermediate state, like that of purgatory, to which small offenders can be consigned. As there is no medium between the renunciation of sin and the allowance of it, so there is no middle state between heaven and hell. The alternative is clear, definite, irreversible. You cannot be "Christ's, unless you crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts."

It is worthy of observation, that our Lord does not affirm that the retaining of a right hand or eye will ensure eternal punishment; but he takes it for granted; he considers it as an acknowledged truth: yea, even before the resurrection of the body had been fully revealed, he considers that also as acknowledged; he takes for granted that the body, as well as the soul, shall be a subject of happiness or misery in the eternal world; and he assumes this truth as the ground of his argument. There can be no doubt therefore but that "the whole body will be cast into hell," if any one member of it be made an instrument or occasion of sin.]

**2. A desirable alternative**—[It may seem strange to represent such an alternative as desirable: but it is really so: for a permission to harbour one unmortified lust would be like a permission to drink so much poison, or to retain one disorder preying upon our vitals. But this is not all. Sin, if allowed any part in our affections, will strive for mastery, and never cease, till it has attained an undisputed dominion. It is a leprosy which will overspread the whole man; "a canker which will eat," till it has consumed us utterly. Is it not desirable then to have it altogether eradicated, and to be compelled to wage incessant war against it? Were there any other alternative allowed us, we should want a sufficient stimulus to exertion: we should be apt to side with the traitor, and, for the sake of present ease or gratification, to neglect our true interests. But, when there is no other choice given us, but either to mortify every sinful propensity, or to suffer eternal misery in hell, we are constrained to gird ourselves to the battle, and to "fight without intermission the good fight of faith."]

**3. A necessary alternative**—[This alternative is no arbitrary imposition to which we are subjected without necessity: it arises out of the very nature of things. God himself could not alter it consistently with his own perfections: he could no more give license to his creatures to harbour sin, or decline punishing it if harboured, than he could cease to be holy, or to have a due respect for the

honour of his law. But supposing he were to cancel this alternative, and to admit to the regions of bliss a person who retained one bosom lust, it would be of no avail; for heaven to such a person would not be heaven. Place a man here at a royal banquet; set before him every thing that can please the appetite; let him hear the sweetest melody that ever charmed the ear; let all around him be as full of happiness as their hearts can hold; what enjoyment of it would he have, whilst "a thorn was in his eye?" We do not hesitate to say, that darkness and solitude would to him be far preferable to all this gaiety and splendour. And precisely thus would it be to one who should be admitted into heaven, whilst one unmortified sin was yet rankling in his bosom.]

What to do under such circumstances we learn from,

**II. The advice given—The advice is simply this, To mortify sin without reserve**—[It is here allowed, that the mortification of sin is a difficult and painful work, like the destruction of an eye, or the excision of a hand. But still it must be done. Of course, the language of our text is not to be taken literally: the maiming of the body, though it might incapacitate that individual member for the commission of sin, would effect nothing towards the eradicating of sin from the heart. We must understand the text as referring to the dispositions of the mind, and to the things which call forth those dispositions into exercise. Do our connexions draw us aside from the path of duty? Are we beguiled by their example, or intimidated by their authority? We must learn to withstand their influence, and to submit either to their hatred or contempt, rather than be betrayed by them into any thing that is displeasing to God. Doubtless, we should do every thing in our power to conciliate them; but if nothing but a dereliction of duty will satisfy them, we must be prepared with meekness to reply, "Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye." Do our interests betray us into sin? Are we engaged in a trade which we cannot carry on without doing things which our consciences condemn? Or have we prospects in life which must be sacrificed, if we will follow the Lord fully? There must be no hesitation on this point: we must pluck out the right eye, and cut off the right hand, and "cast them from us" with abhorrence, rather than suffer them to warp our judgment, and defile our conscience.

Are our passions the occasions of sin? We must learn to subdue them by fasting and prayer, and to restrain the gratification of them to the limits which God himself has assigned. We must "mortify our members upon earth," and "crucify the whole body of sin."

Let it not be said, We require too much. It is not man, but God, that requires these things: and he has promised that "his grace shall be sufficient for us;" so that, however the work may exceed all human power, we need not be discouraged: we are authorized, every one of us, to say with the Apostle, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." Only "walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh."

The argument with which this advice is enforced, is such as no human being can withstand—[We have before observed, that our Lord assumes this as an acknowledged and indisputable truth, namely, that eternal misery in hell must be the consequence of indulging one single sin. From hence he argues, that "it is expedient" to part with sin, rather than incur that tremendous punishment. The pleasure of sin will surely be too dearly purchased at such a price as this. Whatever we design to procure, we always consider what its value is: no man would give a large estate for a worthless insignificant bauble: nor would any man gratify his palate with a poisonous draught, which he knew would fill him with excruciating agony to the latest hour of his life. We grant then that sin is pleasant, just for the moment: but will that momentary enjoyment repay an eternity of misery, of such misery too as no imagination can conceive? We grant too that something may be gained by sin: but can the gain ever equal the loss that will be sustained? "If a man should gain the whole world, what would it profit him, if by that means he lost his own soul?"

Moreover, the pain of mortifying sin can never be compared with that which will follow from the indulgence of it. Be it so, the mortifying of sin is painful; but what are the sufferings of hell fire? Were the pain of self-denial a million times greater than it is, it is but for a moment: whereas the pains of hell are everlasting. Alas! who can think of them, and not tremble? Who can think of them, and hesitate one moment about the mortifying of sin? See what we do when informed that the retaining of a limb will endanger our lives: we suffer amputation, however painful it may be; and are glad to pay the person that will perform the operation for us. O let us be equally wise in relation to our souls!

From the contemplation of this argument then we most heartily concur in our Lord's advice: If your connexions ensnare you, renounce them; if your interests, sacrifice them; if your passions, get them subdued and mortified. Having your choice given you, learn, with Mary, to "choose the better part."

We cannot conclude the subject without pointing out to you the importance,

**1. Of ministerial faithfulness**—[It can be no pleasure to us to speak of "hell fire," and to alarm you with denouncing it as the portion of so great a multitude of our fellow-creatures. But what are we to do? What did our Lord himself do in the words before us? If we are silent, we cannot alter God's determinations: whether we tell you of it or not, this is the alternative which God has given you: we cannot reverse it; we cannot soften it; we cannot lower it to your wishes or attainments. We may deceive and ruin you by our silence; but we cannot benefit you at all: we shall only involve ourselves in your ruin. If indeed we have put a wrong

construction on our text, then we are blameable for alarming you without reason: but yet, as long as we believe this to be the mind and will of God, we must declare it: "knowing, as we do, the terrors of the Lord, we must persuade men;" and you may at least derive this advantage from our warnings, namely, to be stirred up to a diligent inquiry after truth. But suppose our interpretation of the passage to be just, of what infinite importance to you is it to be rightly informed respecting it! How many of you may now escape the miseries of hell, who, but for this warning, might have been subjected to them for ever! Surely then, brethren, you are indebted to us for our fidelity. You cannot but know that such faithfulness is the parent of contempt and obloquy. But we would gladly endure infinitely more than ever we have endured, if only you would take heed to our words, and flee from the wrath to come. To all of you then we say, Be thankful for the ministry that probes you to the quick, and that consults your benefit rather than your approbation.]

**2. Of personal integrity**—[Self-love inclines us always to view ourselves more favourably than we ought. If we are conscious of some secret evil, we excuse ourselves as much as possible, in order to dissipate all fear of future punishment. If we hear that evil exposed, we are rather led to contemplate it in others, than to view it in ourselves: or if constrained to advert to our own case, we condemn the minister, either as personal, or as too severe. But what folly is this! If we had reason to apprehend that we had caught the plague, should we not be anxious to ascertain the truth, in order that we might counteract the infection, and escape its baneful effects? Why then are we not equally solicitous to know the state of our souls before God? Why will we shut our eyes against the light? What harm can arise from knowing what God has said concerning us? O put not from you, brethren, the word of life! Rather come hither, in order that you may be probed; in order that there may be no evil in you undiscovered. Examine yourselves with all imaginable care. Be afraid of nothing so much as being left in ignorance, and deceiving your own souls. When we speak the severest truths, apply them, not to others, but yourselves: take them as a light wherewith to search your own hearts: and beg of God to aid you by his Holy Spirit. Let David's prayer be ever on your lips: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting."] (Matthew 5:29,30 The Necessity of Mortifying Every Sin)

Matthew 5:30 **"If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off 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 go into hell. (NASB: Lockman)**

**Greek:** kai ei e dextera sou cheir skandalizei (3SPA1) se, ekkopson (2SAAM) auten kai bale (2SAAM) apo sou: sumpherei (3SPA1) gar soi ina apoletai (3SAMS) en ton melon sou kai me olon to soma sou eis geennan apeltee. (3SAAS)

**Amplified:** And if your right hand serves as a trap to ensnare you or is an occasion for you to stumble and sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better that you lose one of your members than that your entire body should be cast into hell (Gehenna).

**NLT:** And if your hand--even if it is your stronger hand--causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ([NLT - Tyndale House](#))

**Philips:** "Yes, if your right hand leads you astray cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than that your whole body should go to the rubbish-heap. ([New Testament in Modern English](#))

**Wuest:** And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it out and throw it from you, for it is to your profit that one of your members perish and that not your whole body go off into hell. (Wuest: Expanded Translation: Eerdmans)

**Young's Literal:** And, if thy right hand doth cause thee to stumble, cut it off, and cast from thee, for it is good to thee that one of thy members may perish, and not thy whole body be cast to gehenna.

**IF YOUR RIGHT HAND MAKES YOU STUMBLE, CUT IT OFF AND THROW IT FROM YOU:** **kai ei e dextera sou cheir skandalizei (3SPA1) se, ekkopson (2SAAM) auten kai bale (2SAAM) apo sou**

- **If your right hand** - Mt 11:6; 13:21; 16:23; 18:6,7; Mt 26:31; Lk 17:2; Ro 9:33; 14:20,21; 1Co 8:13; Gal 5:11; 1Pe 2:8
- **Throw it** - Mt 22:13; Mt 25:20; Luke 12:5
- [Matthew 5 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Matthew 5:27-30: Who is an Adulterer? 1](#) - John MacArthur
- [Matthew 5:27-30: Who is an Adulterer? 2](#) - John MacArthur

#### Related Passages:

Luke 17:2+ "It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he would cause one of these little ones to stumble."

Matthew 22:13+ "Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Luke 12:5+ "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him!"

Romans 8:12-14+ So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—13 for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if **by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body**, you will live. 14 (EVIDENCE OF SALVATION) For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

## BE RUTHLESS WITH SIN DEAL DECISIVELY!

**If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you** - In saying, "If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you" (Matthew 5:30), Jesus uses deliberate hyperbole to stress the deadly seriousness of sin, calling not for physical self-harm but for Spirit enabled decisive, radical action against whatever repeatedly leads a person into sin. The "**right hand**" symbolizes what is useful, valued, or seemingly indispensable, and Jesus' point is that even good or beneficial things must be removed (cf Heb 12:1+) if they become sources of temptation, because it is better to lose something temporal than to suffer eternal loss. True discipleship, following Jesus, therefore requires eliminating the cause of sin (the root), not merely regretting its effects (the fruit).

**John Flavel** very wisely observed that, "The greatest difficulty **IN** conversion is to win the heart to God; and the greatest difficulty **AFTER** conversion is to keep the heart with God." (cf Pr 4:23 - see discussion)

*"Be killing sin, or sin will be killing you"*

- John Owen in Of the Mortification of Sin in Believers

In his famous saying **John Owen** is teaching that sin is never passive. You might want to read that line again. It is either being actively opposed by the believer through the Spirit (Ro 8:13+, Gal 5:16,17+), or it is actively working to weaken, harden, and ultimately destroy spiritual life. **There is no neutral ground.** "**Be killing sin**" means we need to carry out continual intentional, Spirit-empowered mortification. "**Or sin will be killing you**" speaks of the ongoing, corrosive spiritual decay of lust (cf 2Pe 1:4b+, Gal 6:7,8+, 1Pe 2:11+) Owen's point aligns directly with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:29–30. The takeaway is that half-measures against sin are not only deceptive but deadly. Rest assured that what we tolerate today will dominate tomorrow. Kill it today!

*Sin is not something to manage—*

*it must be mortified, or it will mortify us.*

**Stumble** ([4624](#)) (**skandalizo** from **skandalon** = a trap = put a snare or stumbling block in way) (Click for in depth study of root word skandalon) means to entrap, trip up, or entice to sin, offend. The idea is to put a stumbling block or impediment in the way, upon which another may trip and fall.

Note that **skandalizo** is in the **present tense** which signifies that **your right hand** is **continually** partaking of such passing pleasures of passion. These activities represent this person's lifestyle. They are not just momentary "slipups" or even a "season of backsiding" (see quotations on **Backsliding or Drifting**) as can occur in the life of any believer (if you think you are immune to these sins of sensuality, then you had better take heed lest you fall!), but they represent the person's **lifelong passionate pursuit**. How many are there who profess Christ and yet fail to ever demonstrate any evidence of a "circumcision" of their heart, failing to exhibit a new heart which stimulates and empowers a new passion to pursue godliness and holiness (cp Paul's warning commands in 2 Cor 13:5). If one's general lifestyle direction is ever and always in the general direction of hell (contrast the "highway of holiness" Isaiah 35:8; disciplining oneself for godliness - notes 1Ti 4:7; 4:8; 4:9; 4:10; 4:11, 4:12), then that is what God will bequeath to them as their just reward.

**Cut off** ([1581](#)) (**ekkopto** from **ek** = out + **kópto** = cut) means to cause to cease by removing, to do away with, to eliminate and figuratively to hinder.

**Cut off** and **throw** are both in the **aorist imperative**, a command from our Lord and Master calling for urgent action. Do this now! It is critically important! Don't hesitate or delay! Deal drastically with anything that predisposes you to sin!

Jesus calls not for **self mutilation** but **self control**, part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) Who indwells the New Heart of men in the New Covenant and is able to

"and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances." (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

**Paul** echoes this same instruction writing...

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (notes Philippians 2:12-13)

In Romans Paul presents a striking contrast writing that...

if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if **by the Spirit** you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (notes Romans 8:13)

**What can a man do?** Remember that citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven are in a new covenant, and have a new heart. The Spirit of God within us leads (Gal 5:16, 17, 18) us to walk worthy of our calling.

But I say, walk (your conduct or daily behavior, make the choice to make the conduct yielded to the Holy Spirit the habit of your life each morning when you awake for the "rest" [time and quality of life] of your life = **present imperative**) by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh (note he does not say you will no longer have the desire! It will be in these mortal bodies in varying degrees until we are glorified and freed even from the presence and pleasure of sin. Hallelujah!). 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under (hupo = frequently meant not simply to be beneath but to be totally under the power, authority, and control of something or someone) the Law. (Galatians 5:16-18)

**Thus now no longer under law but under grace we can...**

**1) Guard our heart**, specifically what we let in. For out of your heart flow the springs of life.

**Pr 4:23** Watch over your **heart** with all diligence, For from it flow the springs of life.

**2) Guard our mind** (heart), for as we think in your heart and mind so you are

**Proverbs 23:7a:** For as he thinks in his **heart**, so is he. (NKJV)

**3) Understand that what you let into your**heart** will come out.**

**Mt 15:18** "But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the **heart**, (this also speaks to murder with our mouth, cf) and those defile the man.19 For out of the **heart** come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.20 These are the things which defile the man; but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile the man."

**Knowing that the battle is in the mind** (vis-à-vis the eyes and the touch) we can do the following empowered by grace and the Holy Spirit...

**1) Take thoughts captive. Fight the war with spiritual weapons which** is possible because of the Spirit and the Word of God.

**2 Corinthians 10:3** For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh,4 for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.5 We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, (See notes 2Cor 10:3; 10:4; 10:5)

**2) Think on godly things. Control your thought life. Let it live in the atmosphere of God's Word.** We are responsible for what we think about. Thinking is as much a choice as doing. Our environment doesn't push my buttons and make me think a certain way. I choose to think certain ways and about certain things. If it is not true (etc) Paul writes, do not let it enter your mind (or your **heart**). The Christian who fills his heart and mind with God's Word will have a "built-in radar" for detecting wrong thoughts. "Great peace have they which love Thy Law" (Ps 119:165). Right thinking is no accident but is the result of a conscious choice to make time for daily meditation on the Word of God (see **Primer on Biblical Meditation**). Don't say you don't have time or can't find the time! If you are too busy to meditate (and chewing cud takes more than the "One Minute Bible" provides!) then simply put, you are too busy! You

need to think about eternity rather than the Dow Jones or NASDAQ Indices and then you **MUST** make time. And don't substitute even good devotional books for the "law of the LORD" which is "pure" and alone truly restores a dry weary soul (Ps 19:7). Note that devotional books are not "bad" but they are not the "best". If you use them, then please, please read the Scriptures they list (not just the chapter and verse annotation). Here is a recommendation if you would like to use a devotional (not all devotionals are "created equal") - place [Our Daily Bread](#) on your favorites list and read it in the morning. Begin your day with God. And please read the Scriptures which are linked to the devotional, for that is where the real power lies.

**Philippians 4:8** Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell (not a suggestion, a command to do this continually = present imperative) (middle voice calls for you to initiate the action and participate yourself in the result/effect) on these things. 9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you. (see notes **Philippians 4:8-9**)

**NO LOOPHOLES- W. C. Fields**, the comedian, film actor, and known agnostic, surprised one of his friends who found him thumbing through a Bible while on his deathbed. Amazed, his friend asked what he was doing. Fields replied,

"I'm looking for a loophole."

The **Pharisees** were similar to **W C Fields** and were more interested in the "paperwork" of the divorce proceeding than in God's original design for marriage. They taught that as long as a **certificate of divorce** had been issued, the divorce was legitimate. Jesus warned that human tradition did not have the authority to nullify God's standard of righteousness. Divorce and subsequent remarriage, when the grounds fell outside the parameters set by God, resulted in adultery no matter what formalities the Pharisees undertook in an attempt to validate the union. What was true of society in Jesus' day is still true today. What is legal isn't necessarily right. Christians must answer to a higher authority than human custom or civil code. God alone has the ultimate authority to define what is right and wrong.

**FOR IT IS BETTER FOR YOU TO LOSE ONE OF THE PARTS OF YOUR BODY, THAN FOR YOUR WHOLE BODY TO GO INTO HELL:** sumpherei (3SPAI) gar soi hina apoletai (3SAMS) en ton melon sou kai me holon to soma sou eis geennan apeltee. (3SAAS)

For - see term of explanation

**Hell** (1067) (**geenna** from Hebrew **gay** = valley + **Hinnom**) is literally the **valley of Hinnom**, the ravine or valley south of Jerusalem where the refuse and filth, bodies of dead animals, and bodies of criminals were cast and burned. These fires were continually kept burning, all a fit symbol of the future home of all unrepentant, unregenerate wicked men and women. It was a foul, forbidding place where the fire, smoke, and stench never ceased. It is thus fitting that geenna is where sin and unrepentant sinners will one day find it's "resting place".

**See on site Study of Eternal Punishment**

**Gilbrant** - Originally geenna, or gehenna, was the name of a valley south of Jerusalem. Gê Hinnôm (Hebrew) equals Hinnom Valley (cf. Joshua 15:8; 18:16). Thus the Greek word has its origin in this Hebrew expression (cf. Aramaic gê Hinnâm). The valley itself was the site of child sacrifice during the time of King Ahab and Manasseh. There children were sacrificed to Molech. King Josiah declared the place unclean, and later it was referred to as the place of the dead. The form Gaienna is found in the Septuagint of Joshua 18:16, but it is not found in secular Greek writings. In the Old Testament the Valley of Hinnom was, to some extent, viewed as a symbol of Israel's apostasy from or rejection of God. As stated above, it was a site where offerings and sacrifices were made to Molech (2 Chr 33:6; Jer 32:35). As a result of this association with apostasy both the place and the word became associated with God's punishment and judgment (Jeremiah 7:32; 19:6). Later Judaism associated God's judgment of His people with the Valley of Hinnom. Several times the Old Testament explicitly associates the valley with God's judgment. Isaiah especially reflects such an understanding. In a picture of final things Isaiah envisioned salvation (a new heaven and a new earth, Isa 66:22,23ff.; cf. Revelation 21:1ff.) as well as judgment (the worm does not die and the fire will not be quenched, Isaiah 66:24; cf. Mark 9:48). In these cases gehenna is not a literal reference to a valley south of Jerusalem; instead it symbolizes the future judgment and punishment. (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary in the [Complete Biblical Library](#))

**Geenna** is essentially synonymous with the **lake of fire**, a God's "cosmic garbage dump," mentioned in the Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20:14-15-[see note](#). Into this place both **death** and **Hades** are cast. It is the place that was prepared for "the devil and his angels" (Mt 25:41), but which will also become the final abode of the unrighteous. Jesus Himself declared "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Mt 25:46, see context Mt 25:31-46).

#### See Dictionary Articles on Gehenna and Hell -

- [Gehenna - Holman Bible Dictionary](#)
- [Hell - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology](#)
- [Hades \(Sheol\) - to be differentiated from Gehenna](#) (See also [Sheol](#))
- International Standard Bible Encyclopedia [Gehenna](#)
- McClintock and Strong's Bible Encyclopedia [Gehenna](#)
- The Jewish Encyclopedia [Gehenna](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible [Gehenna](#)
- Hastings' Dictionary of the NT [Gehenna Gehenna \(2\)](#)

**Hinnom (another article)** (the OT term - used 11v = Josh 15:8; 18:16; 2Kgs 23:10; 2Chr 28:3; 33:6; Neh 11:30; Jer 7:31, 32; 19:2, 6; 32:35) is the corresponding OT term which was the name of the deep narrow ravine south of Jerusalem once associated with the pagan god **Moloch** and his disgusting rites of infant sacrifices (see also Jer 19:5; Ezek 16:20; 23:37). God clearly prohibited child sacrifice in Lev 18:21, 20:2-5. Note that **Topheth** is a synonym of the Valley of Hinnom (see 2Ki 23:10). In Jesus' day, the **Valley of Hinnom** was the site of Jerusalem's garbage dump. The fires kept constantly burning there gave off foul-smelling smoke, and the dump was infested with maggots! As one contemplates the unabated practice of abortions in America, it is difficult to escape the parallel with the ancient abomination of child sacrifice. It is also notable that the practice of offering sacrifices of one's offspring in the OT was almost always associated with pagan idol worship (especially Baal)! And then recall that both the Old and New Testaments associate idol worship with the demons! (Read 1Cor 10:20, Lev 17:7, Dt 32:16-17, Ps 106:37-39, see also Rev 9:20-[note](#))

It is notable that except for James the strong word "**geenna**" is uttered only from the lips of Jesus the very One Who alone could save men and women from **geenna**! Most often He uses **geenna** in a context of warning His hearers against persistent sin against God. Geenna is always used figuratively in the NT to refer to the fiery abode where the unregenerate, ungodly physically dead will be punished eternally.

**BDAG** writes that in 2Kings 23:10 "the kethibh has the plural (sons of Hinnom) Valley of the Sons of Hinnom, a ravine south of Jerusalem. There, according to later Jewish popular belief, God's final judgment was to take place (cp. Just., A I, 19, 8).

**John MacArthur** - Geenna (hell) is derived from [Hinnom \(another article\)](#) the name of a valley just southwest of Jerusalem used as the city dump. It was a forbidding place where trash was continually burned and where the fire, smoke, and stench never ceased. The location was originally desecrated by King Ahaz when "he burned incense in the valley of Ben-hinnom, and burned his sons in fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had driven out before the sons of Israel" (2Chr 28:3). That wicked king had used the valley to erect an altar to the pagan god Molech, an altar on which one's own children sometimes were offered by being burned alive. It would later be called "the valley of Slaughter" (Jer 19:6). As part of his godly reforms, King Josiah tore down all the altars there and turned the valley into the garbage incinerator it continued to be until New Testament times. The name of the valley therefore came to be a metonym for the place of eternal torment, and was so used by Jesus eleven times. (See [Matthew Commentary](#))

**Geenna** - 12x in 12v - all translated hell.

Matthew 5:22-note "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing,' shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, 'You fool,' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery **hell**.

Matthew 5:29-note "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**. 30 "If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off 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 go into **hell**.

Matthew 10:28 "Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him Who is able to destroy both soul and body in **hell**.

**Comment:** Be careful not to misinterpret Jesus' word '**destroy**' as a synonym for annihilation (to cause cessation of existence) of one's soul. That a soul would be completely obliterated in Gehenna, the Lake of

Fire, would surely be the desire of any who end up in that horrible place. However the Greek verb Jesus used for "destroy" was **apollumi**, which DOES NOT signify total annihilation! Instead it means not the loss of being (of one's soul), but the loss of well-being. **Apollumi** means that the soul originally created in the image of God is subjected in essence to eternal ruin so that he or she can no longer serve the use for which they were created (To worship God and enjoy Him forever)! The soul of those damned still exists, but tragically, it is rendered eternally useless! Dear believer, if this doesn't break your heart, I don't know what will! The Gospel promises everlasting life for the one who believes. The failure to possess this life in Christ will result in utter ruin and eternal uselessness, but not cessation of existence! Dear reader, does not this grave, sobering (pun intended) truth impel you to want to share the eternally soul saving Gospel of Jesus Christ with EVERYONE you know, with everyone with whom providence brings you into contact! May God's Spirit take this tragic truth of an unbelieving soul's life outside of Christ and use it to embolden us, setting our hearts ablaze to passionately share Jesus with all who will listen. Amen. (See [Is annihilationism biblical? | GotQuestions.org](#))

Matthew 18:9 "If your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out and throw it from you. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be cast into the fiery **hell**.

Matthew 23:15 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel around on sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of **hell** as yourselves.

**MacArthur: Of hell** translates a Greek genitive that refers to belonging to or being characterized by **Son of hell** referred to a person who was especially characterized by hellishness. **Twice...a son hell** would be person who was doubly hellish and doubly damned. Hell is from geenna, derived from the name of a valley just outside Jerusalem called Hinnom where refuse was burned. It was considered an accursed place because it was the site where ancient worshipers of the pagan deity Moloch offered their children as live burnt sacrifices, a hideous practice taken up even by some Israelites (see 2Chron. 28:3; Jer. 7:31). When King Josiah declared the place unclean (2Kings 23:10), it became a garbage dump, and because flames and smoke arose from the valley continually, it also became a vivid picture of the eternal fires of hell. How grateful every believer should be that at some time in His life he was confronted by a spiritual door-opener rather than a spiritual door-closer, someone who shows the way to the kingdom rather than shuts people out of it. And how grateful every believer should be who has the opportunity to hear and study the Word of God in truth. Even a dull presentation of the true gospel is immeasurably superior to the most exciting presentation of a false gospel that damns to hell. As a citizen of God's kingdom, every believer ought to be one who opens the door of the kingdom to others. (See [Matthew Commentary - Page 380](#))

Matthew 23:33 "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how will you escape the sentence of**hell**?

Mark 9:43 "If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than, having your two hands, to go into **hell**, into the unquenchable fire, 45 "If your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than, having your two feet, to be cast into **hell**, 47 "If your eye causes you to stumble, throw it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than, having two eyes, to be cast into **hell**,

Luke 12:5 "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into **hell**; yes, I tell you, fear Him!

James 3:6 And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by **hell**.

**MacArthur** - That (the tongue) is said to be **set on fire by hell** indicates that the tongue can be Satan's tool, fulfilling hell's purposes to pollute, corrupt, and destroy. It is unbelievably dangerous and destructive... Even mature believers know that in their remaining fleshly humanness, their tongues still have great power to devastate and therefore need constant guarding and control. (See [James Commentary - Page 157](#))

Although some have taken Jesus' teaching literally (and have performed various acts of "self abasement and even mutilation), they have found that their actions were still "**of no value against fleshly indulgence**". We must remember Who we now are in Christ and that...

If (since = a fulfilled condition) you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, 21 "Do not handle, do not taste, do

not touch!" 22 (which all refer to things destined to perish with the using)-- in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? 23 These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence. (see notes on Colossians 2:20-23).

Clearly Jesus is speaking to our hearts for they are the source out of which the lustful looks, flirtatious words, sensual touches proceed. Do whatever it takes to fight the good fight of faith. And remember it is a fight of faith based on grace. The danger is to put yourself under Law which will only arouse your flesh

For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death. (see notes Romans 7:5).

**Warren Wiersbe** adds that...

Obviously, our Lord is not talking about literal surgery; for this would not solve the problem in the heart. The eye and the hand are usually the two "culprits" when it comes to sexual sins, so they must be disciplined. Jesus said, "Deal immediately and decisively with sin! Don't taper off—cut off!" Spiritual surgery is more important than physical surgery, for the sins of the body can lead to eternal judgment. We think of passages like Colossians 3:5 (see note) and Romans 6:13 (see note); [Romans 12:1 \(note\)](#); Romans 12:2 (note); Romans 13:14 (note). ([Bible Exposition Commentary](#))

If the Internet is tempting and/or stumbling you, then consider subscribing for a small fee to a service known as [Covenant Eyes](#). This system does not reside on your computer (or other portable device such as your iphone or ipad) but in an offsite computer, which distinguishes it from most other internet monitoring software. [Covenant Eyes](#) allows you to continue to have unrestricted access to the internet, but monitors every site visited and scores every site especially those that are "off limits". A monthly report of your "score" is sent to your accountability partner (this is what King David lacked in 2Sa 11:1-27!). [Covenant Eyes](#) is not failsafe (it can be uninstalled, but an email is automatically sent to the accountability partner) but it is by far the best internet monitoring system available in my opinion. Also, if you are a parent with young children or teenagers, [Covenant Eyes](#) would be an excellent tool to monitor where they are visiting (don't spy -- explain to them what you are doing which itself may be a godly deterrent!) and you could have the monthly report sent to your email. In the final analysis, no manmade "system" is perfect. Ultimately, sexual purity is a matter of the **heart**, Each day we must each make a conscious, Spirit enabled, choice under grace (not law) to arise and surrender our will to our Lord and Master. Then we must remain sensitive to His Spirit's inner voice (and His warnings) all during the day. As Proverbs 4:23 ([see in depth notes](#)) states we are to remain vigilant like a military guard (who doesn't fall asleep at the post) so that no destructive enemy intruders gain access to our heart, the "control center" of our soul! This begs the question to all (but especially to men): **Are you guarding your heart? But remember that you are not alone in this task. You have the indwelling Spirit and you MUST learn to depend on His enabling power** (see Gal 5:16-note, cp Php 2:12-note, Php 2:13-note)

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**Tough Choices** - On July 20, 1993, while cutting down oaks in a Pennsylvania forest, Don Wyman got his leg pinned beneath a fallen tree. No one could hear his yells for help. After digging for more than an hour to try to free his bleeding, shattered leg, he hit stone. He would bleed to death unless he did something drastic. Wyman made his decision. Using a wrench and the starter cord from his chain saw as a tourniquet, he cut off the flow of blood to his shin. Somehow he had the fortitude to amputate his own leg below the knee with his pocket knife. He crawled to his vehicle and drove to a farmer's home. The farmer got him the help that saved his life. Like Don Wyman, men who want to follow Christ face tough choices. We have sinful habits we want to keep as badly as our leg. We also have a Lord and Savior who calls us to repent. It takes strength to cut off our wickedness. —Craig Brian Larson

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**DEALING WITH SIN** - On several occasions when visiting men in jail, I have seen them shake their heads mournfully and say, "I never thought it would come to this." When they began to break minor laws, they fully intended to change their ways before getting into serious trouble. But instead, one thing led to another, and they became more and more involved in a life of crime. Now they languish in jail, facing a long imprisonment.

These men failed to realize that sin always progresses. When we flout God's laws in one facet of life, a kind of mathematical law of addition and multiplication goes into effect. Soon sin affects other areas of our lives. It's foolish to think we can keep just one pet sin. That single sin will grow and spread unless we deal radically with it. That's why Jesus spoke of cutting off the offending hand and plucking out the offending eye (Matt. 18:8-9). By using such a strong figure of speech, He was saying, do whatever is necessary to stop.

We cannot afford to toy with sin. Three times in Romans 1 , Paul said of unbelievers that "God gave them up" to their evil ways. In other words, He allows wickedness to run its downhill course until judgment falls and there's no escape. We can avoid the inevitable arithmetic of sin by trusting Jesus as Savior. His power in our lives can overcome any sin. —H. V. Lugt (Reprinted by permission

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No one becomes wicked all at once.

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**Halfway Measures** - It would have been unthinkable for Allied leaders to let Adolf Hitler surrender and then reinstate him as dictator of his country. But that's exactly what King Ahab did to Ben Hadad, an unspeakably cruel king who started two wars against God's people. Eventually, just as God's prophet predicted, Ahab was killed on orders from the very man he had spared (1Ki. 22:1ff).

This is not a lesson in how to treat enemies. Rather, Ahab's fatal example illustrates the danger of taking halfway measures in dealing with sin.

I know a man who has spent much of his life in prison because of violent crimes he did while drunk. When released, he starts out well because he avoids alcohol. But then he thinks he can drink in moderation. Soon he's in trouble again.

Don't take halfway measures with dishonesty, lack of self-control, or sexual impurity. Instead, deal radically with your sinful tendencies. (Read what Jesus said in Matthew 5:29,30 about the eye or hand that causes you to sin.) And "put to death" your sinful inclinations (Col. 3:5).

Don't put yourself in situations where you are likely to be tempted. Ask God to help you take a wholehearted approach to tackling sin. Halfway measures are doomed to fail. --H V Lugt (Reprinted by permission from [Our Daily Bread Ministries](#). Please do not repost the full devotional without their permission.)

We can't afford to play with fire  
Or tempt a serpent's bite;  
We can't afford to think that sin  
Brings any true delight. --Anon.

**To be moderate in sin is no more possible than to be moderate in death.**