

## Seven Deadly Sins

### David & Bathsheba: When Desire Destroys

#### 2 Samuel 11

In the spring of the year it was a time when kings go forth to battle, but David remained in Jerusalem.

It happened, late one afternoon, when David arose from his couch and was walking on the roof of the king's house, that he saw from the roof a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful. David inquired about the woman. The report came back: "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite." Then David sent messengers to summon her, and she came to him. Then, David lay with her. (Now she had been purifying herself from her uncleanness.) Then she returned to her house.

When the woman learned that she had conceived, she sent word to David, "I am pregnant."

David, then, sent word to Joab, "Send me Uriah the Hittite." And Joab sent Uriah to David. When Uriah came to him, David asked how Joab was doing and how the people were doing and how the war was going. Then David said to Uriah, "Go down to your house and wash your feet." So, Uriah went out of the king's house. After he left, the king sent him a present. But Uriah slept at the door of the king's house with all the servants of his lord, and did not go down to his house.

The next morning, the servants said to David, "Uriah did not go down to his house."

David then said to Uriah, "Have you not come from a journey? Why did you not go down to your house?"

Uriah said to David, "The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in booths, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing."

Two days later David invited him to dinner in his presence. They drank, and David made him drunk. But, that evening Uriah slept with the servants of his lord as before. He did not go down to his house.

In the morning David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah. In the letter he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him, that he may be struck down, and die." So, as Joab was besieging the city, he assigned Uriah to the place where he knew there were valiant men. In the fighting some of David's servants fell. Among those who died was Uriah the Hittite.

Then Joab sent word to David about the fighting: "Some of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also."

When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah, her husband, was dead, she lamented over her husband. When the mourning was over, David brought her to his house. She became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased the Lord.

“In the spring of the year it was a time when kings go forth to battle, but David remained in Jerusalem”... So begins 2 Samuel 11, one of the most famous and infamous stories in the whole Bible and in the whole of world literature. It’s a story of adultery and murder. I’ll be taking you through it in a moment.

With the David & Bathsheba story we are continuing our series on the 7 Deadly Sins. We began by considering where sin comes from (Gen 3). Then, last week we looked at Nebuchadnezzar and pride. Today we are looking at lust.

Sin is part of the story that we tell each week when we gather to worship. The story begins in the glory and goodness of an unspoiled creation and our unfettered adoration of God. The next chapter is the Fall, that Titanic collision that will doom us without a Saviour – we confess our sins. The 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of this panoramic history is Redemption – God comes to us, to proclaim the good news, the gospel... so that, chapter 4 he may bring creation to completion – he will bring his children safely home and make all things right and new, a promise and hope we celebrate with joy and confidence at the Table.

But, sin is not the whole story. And without the rest of the story, any talk about sin will only drive us more deeply into despair. Even when we focus on sin for a bit, we always want to tell the whole story

And yes, sin is deadly. Not just these 7. Each sin is deadly. How many stones did it take for David to fell Goliath? Just 1. How many links need to snap before the chain is broken? Just 1. So too with sin. They’re all deadly, and 1 is not more lethal than another. We’re all Goliath felled with 1 stone and our face is in the mud with some kid dancing on our back about to cut off our head. For all of us, the chain from which we’re hanging has broken... and holding onto what’s left of the chain with all our might won’t stop the freefall.

But biblical teachers as early as Augustine identified these 7 as a kind of familiar core – they touch most areas of our lives, and it’s hard to imagine any sin that is not somehow connected to these 7.

The object of this series on sin is not to convince you that sin exists. As CS Lewis begins *Mere Christianity*, he says there are 2 things everyone everywhere knows: there is a way things are supposed to be, and things are not that way. It’s not my goal to put a guilt trip on you, to shackle you with a heavy burden. I sin against you, and you sin against me. That’s true. But, above all else as David will say through his tears of repentance for the sins recorded in today’s text, Against you, you only, my God have I sinned. Every sin is sin against God – Father, Son, and Spirit – and it is the Spirit’s job, as Jesus tells us in Jn 16, to convince us about who we are, where we are, what we’ve done... and to convince us of the good news of the gospel, the completed work of Jesus on behalf of all who put their trust in him. If you haven’t yet put your trust in Jesus, I hope today will be the day you find forgiveness and acceptance in him.

Even as followers of Jesus, even as people who by God’s grace have new life in Christ... We sin, yes, you know that... but here’s the key - the **reason** we sin is that we **love** our sin. The gospel remedy, the power to stop sinning is to love something else

more... and that something is God himself. Remember, this is what Thomas Chalmers calls the expulsive power of a new affection... a lesser love being driven out by a greater love, a love for the One who loves us most. Augustine said: You are what you love. If that's true, and I believe it is, the question we face every day is, "what do I love?" because what I love is what defines who I am.

Lust can be an awkward and difficult topic. Talking about lust means we're talking about often very private matters that we don't want exposed – and it's easy to get defensive and accusatory: we say things like, Get out of my face... Back off... Don't be so judgmental. But, more often than not we react that way because we're protective – our cravings and addictions, our sex and sexual identity are at the often vulnerable center of what makes us human.

The David and Bathsheba story is a painful one to watch unfold. Just like the film, A Simple Plan, I mentioned a couple of weeks ago, with each step David takes, we find ourselves saying to him... stop. Don't make things worse. But he does

It was a time when kings went forth to war, but... David... the general, the great giant slayer, the captain of an elite team of mighty warriors... David, remained in Jerusalem. He was idle. He pulled himself off his sofa late in the afternoon – the only thing on TV was Seinfeld reruns. So, he went up to the roof, to walk... maybe enjoy the sunset. And while walking he sees a woman... and he stops. She's on the roof of her house. Right there in plain sight. I mean what's a guy supposed to do – she's just... right there. You know, guys are still using that lame excuse – I sinned because of her, how she dressed... it's her fault... she seduced me. Men are still blaming women for their own sin. There is no hint in the text of any promiscuity on her part. David notices that she is beautiful... He stands mesmerized, and then finally pulls himself away. He feels a bit flush and his pace quickens. An attentive servant asks. What is it, my lord? David looks at him, startled... and then blurts out, The woman... there is a woman who lives in that house near the palace... Find out who she is... He probably came up with some awkward explanation for summoning her.

The servant reappears with the information. My lord, "She is Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite"

But now, heated with desire – he's been replaying the scene in his mind again and again – David says, "yes... thank you... Pause... Go, summon her and bring her to me. The servant obeys... and Bathsheba agrees and comes. How can she not? – he's the king...and David takes what he wants – he forces himself on her sexually and sends her home.

Several weeks pass. Perhaps David has tried to push the images of his adultery to the dark corners of his mind to slowly fade away... except like Poe's tell tale heart, memories and guilt cannot be so easily pushed aside.

David is approached by a messenger who asks to deliver his message out of earshot. He leans in to deliver the news... from Bathsheba. I'm pregnant.

David acts quickly – likely he's already answered the question in his mind: what if she gets pregnant? He sends a message by military courier to the front and to Joab, Send Uriah to me." And Uriah with all speed appears before the King, his commander

in chief, surely wondering why he, of all people should be summoned before the king – what had he done wrong, had he said something, forgotten something.

David approaches him, Uriah, my friend. Tell me... oh, let's sit and talk and dispense with formality. Tell me... how are you? Feeding you well? Accommodations acceptable? And your lovely wife... what's her name... Oh, yes, Bathshebah... Is she well? And how goes that war... Wish I could be there you know but... pressing things here in Jerusalem, just can't get away. So, Uriah, you've been working hard. Exemplary. Why don't you take a few days off. Freshen up, take some time with your wife. You need a break.

Thank you, my lord... and Uriah leaves the room wondering what that was all about.

The next morning, the servants mention to David. You know, that soldier who came to see you yesterday... he spent the night with us in the servants quarters. Why did he do that?

Why indeed? Asks David. Get him back up here.

Uriah... what's this I hear – you didn't go home. You slept in the servants quarters? Why on earth would you do that? Uriah replies, "My lord, The ark and Israel and Judah dwell in tents, and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field. Shall I then go to my house, to eat and to drink and to lie with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do this thing." Uriah as a soldier demonstrates disobedient faithfulness to his commander in chief, his king.

David tries another tactic: Ok, look... Come to dinner tonight. David seats Uriah close enough to keep his wine glass filled, and sure enough, as David had hoped, Uriah is tipsy and drunk... Surely he's feeling warm and good and eager to see his wife... But in the morning David learns that Uriah has made it no further than the servants quarters where he chose to spend the night again.

David is now desperate, and we see the lengths to which he's willing to go to hide his sin. He writes to Joab – put Uriah in the front, in the heat of battle, and if he's not killed in the natural course of the battle, then abandon him so he is sure to be killed. David hands the death warrant to Uriah with instructions to give the letter to Joab. It's not long until David gets a reply from Joab. "Your servant, Uriah the Hittite is dead." Your servant. Joab knows the evil David has ordered. He knows that Uriah had been sacrificed.

Bathsheba grieves, David takes the widow as his wife as they anticipate the arrival of their child. The sin is covered. But, the chapter concludes: "the thing David had done displeased the LORD" – God is disgusted with the whole sordid mess. There it is – perhaps the most famous case study of lust in all of literature. So, let's consider 3 questions this morning.

1<sup>st</sup> What is lust? – we've seen it, but what is it?

2<sup>nd</sup> How do we know that desire is turning to lust?

3<sup>rd</sup> How does God strengthen our desire for himself.

## I. What is lust?

Fundamentally by definition lust is merely strong desire. In the biblical texts the same word can be used positively or negatively. So, translators much choose words appropriate to the context to convey the meaning. We use the expression "a lust for life"

as a good thing – an eager positive outlook. We could say we have a lust for God. That sounds unusual but that is absolutely a good thing – every fiber of our being is devoted to him. Lust, that is, our strong desires are good or evil based on the object of our desire and the power with which that desire controls us.

There is a kind of strong desire that can be fixed on something that will truly nourish us and cause us to flourish... but when we discuss the sin (which is how I'm going to use the word, lust), we mean that kind of desire which is misplaced, fixed on something that cannot nourish and will only destroy. Adam and Eve sinned when that which was good to look at became an object of lust: there was a looking... and in the looking there was liking... and in the liking there was taking... and the sinning was consummated.

Lust is a hot-blooded sin, says Dorothy Sayers. It rises from the deepest part of our being... it's like the Balrog awakened from the deep, that you hear coming long before its glowing eyes pierce the darkness. Lust rises and fills the empty spaces of our soul and courses through our veins. Lust surges into our minds and begins to reorder as it brings its disorder – wrong becomes not so wrong and then probably not wrong and then possibly right and then probably right until we assent, and act

Hot blooded says Sayers, not like those cool sins that start in the mind plotting revenge and cold calculated scheming about how we're going to level the field.

Frederick Buechner defines lust this way: Lust is the craving for salt of a man who is dying of thirst.

I love salt.. it's delicious. It's necessary to a healthy diet. But if that's what I want when I'm dying of thirst, gratifying that desire will only hasten my death and add to my pain.

The notorious Marquis de Sade knew this to be true. He wrote, "Lust's passion WILL be served; it demands, it calculates, it militates, it tyrannizes." But de Sade saw no other solution than to throw himself into the clutches of the desire that destroys.

The early church fathers saw lust as a thief and a deceiver, overwhelming the mind and pointing it toward illusions, with no real ability to grant what it offers. They spoke of lust as a desperate attempt to fill the empty soul. Aquinas wrote, "Man cannot live without joy; therefore when he is deprived of true joy that flows from God it is necessary that he become addicted to pleasure that comes from our flesh."

We talk about being blinded by rage. So, too of lust. Those who have given in to its power are blind, a blindness of our own making... a blindness masquerading as sight, a vision to remake the world in our own likeness, a false vision of the true, the good, and the beautiful. We are all vulnerable to blindness masquerading as truth. We accept what someone says is true, and so our view of the world is filtered, jaded. Worship is an important means of grace to enable us to be self-reflective in God's presence and to test whether the truth we have accepted is actually true. David's lust, in murdering Uriah, eventually wages war against the good.

Lust is misplaced desire. When we hear the word we typically think of misplaced sexual desire. But we can lust for anything: position, power. If the desire remains misplaced it will blind us to the good so convincingly we will use more and more of our power against the good. The word lust often conjures images of someone rooting around for sexual gratification. But sex is often the secondary desire. We often look to sex because we are really hoping to find healing for our loneliness... because we are expressing anger, or because we are looking for significance or belonging. For grace to discipline our lust, we need to understand the true deep longing of our heart – otherwise, we're just superficially manipulating behavior without real transformation.

If we are to have any hope against this sin, we must not be deceived about its power and about its true character. The destructive power of misplaced desire is masked by the wonder and beauty of what we desire. How can what I do be wrong when whatever I desire is so good?

Conversely, let's not forget the good that is realized and how much God delights in our hearts being passionately devoted to him.

So, the solution to lust clearly must be to cut it out at the root, right? If we stop the seeing, then we make it impossible to lust? Isn't that what Jesus says, If your right eye lusts, cut it out?

You'd be thinking of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mt – Mt 5 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that every man who looks at a woman with lustful intent... every woman who looks on a man with lustful intent has already committed adultery in their heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell. (Mt 5:27-30) It's a gruesome image, isn't it?

Jesus does not want us to be deceived in any way about the destructive power of lust, the corrosive disordering power of misplaced desire that ...

Made Adam and Eve discontent with paradise... persuaded them to throw away glory and good for personal ambition and control.

Misplaced desire will so disorder our view of things, that we will die choosing hell – it will be all we want. We'll be deaf and disbelieving of God's promise to give us the true desire of our hearts.

Jesus' words are disturbing aren't they. It's easy to brush them away by saying, Oh he's just exaggerating to make a point. But when we say that, what we're really saying is that we don't believe that lust is really all that powerful... that it's really not a destructive a desire

Here's what Jesus means. The idols we love lead only to eternal destruction. Any sacrifice in this life by comparison that could save us from destruction would be a good trade off – lose an arm today but keep your soul forever. The violent contrast in Jesus teaching dramatizes the power of the grip our idols have on us. What will it take to break the hold they have on us, to shatter our blindness?

Not self-mutilation, that's not what Jesus means. But his remedy is more drastic - he means crucifixion. Christ himself being cut off for us and thrown into hell. He breaks the power of sin by the greater power of his resurrected life given to us that we may be free, as Paul writes in Galatians.

Consider the heartbreak of so many of the lives we read about in the news – the beautiful people, admired the world over because they “have everything” yet all the promises made at the fairy tale weddings, all the beauty, and wealth, and influence... none of things can tame lust. We know it's true, yet.. we envy, we lust... we still want what we think they have

Philosopher and sociologist, René Girard, observed that “Man is the creature who does not know what to desire, and he turns to others in order to make up his mind. We desire what others desire because we imitate their desires.”

## **II. How do we know when desire is being displaced by lust.**

God made us to desire. Last year when Sheryl and I were speaking in South Africa, my talk on sexual temptation to a group of 300 university students was entitled “In Praise of Eros.” Hopefully I won't be called a heretic, but here I disagree with CS Lewis about eros which he views only negatively. But we are to love and to desire what is good even though it's fallen. When we read of Adam's introduction to Eve, his heart leaps out of his chest, and he says... yes, this is woman, the one who completes the image of God, the one I can love and be loved in return. She is good

Whatever we may believe about the power of misplaced desire, we must not believe that desire itself is bad or wrong. When we come home from vacation to find the pipes burst -- water all over the floor, dripping down the walls. We don't say, Bad water. Evil water. Naughty water. You're banished from the house forever. No... we say... (after we clean up the mess) how do we direct the water in our home so that it is life giving for showers... or to water the plants, or to make ice cubes for cold drinks... God has made us to desire, and he delights and is honored by our delighting in all the good things he has given us.

Gregory of Nyssa (4<sup>th</sup> c) preached: “the fact that we desire at all means that we are essentially *incomplete* beings. We are unfinished. If we were self-sufficient, if we were our own good, if we were already finished, we would not have any desire. The reason for this is that desire is nothing less than a yearning for a good which we do not possess.” And it is when we know we are incomplete, we run to the grace of God.

CS Lewis, in this case, wisely tells us that the problem is not that our desires are too strong. Rather, they are too weak.

Eastern thought is utterly wrong about desire – we are not better for desiring less. Rather Christianity teaches that we are more fulfilled when we desire well.

God has made us to work, and work is not merely a drudgery or necessity (sometimes it feels like that), but work is creativity... work is a desire for life to be more than it is... for our lives to bring others a taste of shalom.

But how do we know that desire is being displaced by lust? When...

## **A. We objectify the object of our desire**

When you think of love that nourishes and thrives, it's the love like Christ loves – the love that gives itself away... that gives itself for the good and glory of the person we love.

But when desire becomes lust, the person becomes an object... a tool for our use, a means to an end, a thing.

God comes to Adam in the Garden and asks, Adam, what happened?

Adam retorts, The woman you gave me... that thing

In order for Adam to satisfy his lust, he had to sacrifice Eve as his joy.

It's a risk we face in a highly technological culture. It's easy for us to view people as machines, as objects... and then we rage at store clerks when they don't satisfy our expectations... "morons." When we curse at people we degrade them... shall I throw out a few samples... or can you fill in the blanks for yourself. Or, we make jokes about people so that we can have power over them and demean them and categorize them as less than human, and unworthy of love... so that in some way we may use them to satisfy our misplaced desire... to be better, to be in control.

We know that desire is being displaced by lust when...

## **B. We withdraw.**

When desire becomes a monologue not a dialogue... When we stop giving out of love, the object of our desire exists to give me what I want.

It is not a coincidence that sexual lust often takes us to dark solitary places... alone in front of the computer... alone in the shadows. We plot and scheme in secret.

As lust displaces desire, it isolates us from those who would love us and who value our love.

We know that desire is being displaced by lust when...

## **C. We lose our ability to taste.**

Lust is insatiable.

Delight savors and relishes. Sheryl has an autoimmune condition that has diminished her sense of taste, which is a huge disappointment to her. She loves to taste.

Ironically, we tend to think of lust as the supremely sensuous life... but it's not.

Delight is far more sensuous, where you can hear not a cacophony of birds in your back yards, but... wrens, and a titmouse... a chickadee... a crow. Delight is able to allow the flavors of the food to linger on your palate... mmm... a hint of cumin... rosemary... oh, you devil, you snuck in some of that smokey Hungarian paprika.

Lust kills the joy by desensitizing our sensors and our capacity to delight... and in desperation to experience what we thought we had found in lust, we crave more.. yet



with increasing tastelessness – like Edmund in Narnia endlessly compulsively craving Turkish Delight. Our capacity to savor is gone – lust turns delight into sawdust on our tongue.

We know that desire is being displaced by lust when...

#### **D. We compartmentalize our lives**

When we think about what God has created us to be, we recognize that he is moving us toward wholeness... shalom. As CS Lewis tells us, He's making us more and more human all the time by his grace.

But lust takes us in the opposite direction. We can only justify our misplaced desires when we compartmentalize them... that is, when we allow them to exist quite apart from God... as if they exist out of his presence. Or that our misplaced desires are so personal and private... so exclusively ours, and that we are so convinced that we know how to manage them to bring us what we crave, that we believe they are not a part of the life and kingdom of God. Or, like Mr Worldly Wise Man in Pilgrim's Progress urging Christian, "Yes, Yes, pursue God's blessings. He doesn't want to deprive you." But he would have Christian reach for the blessing separate from the giver of those blessings. Our desires become our own, and ultimately, if not interrupted, our lust, our misplaced desires will convince us that we do not need God at all. We are mere mortals rooting around for whatever happiness we can find.

Paul reminds his friends in Corinth about following our sexual lusts – he reminds them and us, if we have sex with a prostitute or with anyone outside of marriage, Christ really is with us present in the bed of sin. Yet we yield to our lust because we believe we can escape God's presence.

Will Willimon, longtime dean of the chapel at Duke Divinity school suggests that Christians have followed the culture in experiencing this kind of compartmentalization. To illustrate his observation he points to the introduction of birth control. Now, I'm not convinced that the Bible forbids contraception (that's another sermon), but think about the term Birth **CONTROL**. As if we can or should control life. We compartmentalized sex in order to gain control of it. Sexual union has been torn away from conception, and sexual intercourse has been moved far away from responsibility for children. Our lives are compartmentalized.

Well now briefly... our 3<sup>rd</sup> question, How does God strengthen our desire for himself?

### **III. How does God strengthen our desire for himself?**

#### **A. He changes how we see**

Often this comes through suffering. Suffering sifts our longings to reveal what we truly desire... what we want to control... what we refuse to live without. The travail and sorrow of life makes us realize how precious life is. People are not objects to be used and exploited.

And we see the world through the eyes of Jesus. He sees the brokenness and the disorder, and he weeps. It breaks his heart.

And we see Jesus mingling his life with the poor, and the sick, and... sinners. And we see his joy to see them find life and hope and shalom. We follow in his path – stepping into the beauty and brokenness of the world to love those who bear his image.

Again, Lewis reminds us: You've never met a mere mortal. We are not just nuts and bolts, parts of a machine. We are eternal beings destined either for a horror of our own choosing, or glory we have received by grace.

How does God strengthen our desire for himself?

**B. He draws us into community.**

He has made us for himself, Augustine tell us  
Our social life begins by knowing God – Father Son and Spirit

And he has made us for each other.

We are made for community

And this community... the family of God, local congregations are places where you find yourself and you come to learn what it is that your heart is really longing for.

One of the great lies of our day is that we can be all that we need to be, that we can be independent and self sufficient. That everyone is supposed to be an Eagle Scout who can survive in the wilderness with a paperclip and a rubber band... oh, and a roll of DuctTape... except, we've not been created to live in isolation, alone in a hut in the middle of the Adirondacks.

Consider this. One of the most powerful antidotes to sin is the sunlight of community, real honest loving grace-filled community. Community draws my gaze from off myself where it has been fixated, and it surrounds me with other people to know... and who draw out of me a richness of life that I cannot know in isolation. It's a community that begins with our God saying to us, "I will never leave you or forsake you"  
For those of you struggling with pornography, an internet filter may be a help, but the best counsel I can give you is... make good and faithful friends and draw close to them

How does God strengthen our desire for himself?

**C. He restores our senses.**

You know the old expression. Ah, he finally came to his senses.

We usually think of that as mental sense – clear headed thinking and decision making  
But it's more than that. With new life in Christ, every sense is renewed. When our desires are fixed on our one great love, we really can taste and see that the Lord is good. We are to be people who love the world, who revel in creation – the delight of food, wine, play, art, poetry, sex, wood working, the hum of a well-tuned engine, the rumble of Harley Davidson.

And we do taste when we turn our lives toward our God to worship him – in giving us himself, he is giving the world back to us as a gift.

It's no small thing that we come to the Table each week to taste. The bread and cup of the Eucharist are opportunities to savor the bread and feel the bite of the wine – the taste of the presence of Christ and his grace nourishing us in our worship.

God's gift of Sabbath to us is among other things time to smell the roses, to cook and let the aromas fill the house, to shake the walls with laughter, to be still and listen, to be exhilarated with play, to weep with those who weep, to feel the exhaustion of the weary, the lonely, the outcast... to feel the grief of dying.

When we gather for worship, we do come find sanctuary in his presence – together to have the Spirit of God impress Christ upon our whole person: thoughts, desires, and convictions.

He changes how we see through suffering, He draws us into community through friendships, He restores our senses in worship, And finally...

How does God strengthen our desire for himself?

#### **D. He unites our heart**

As David prayed, Unite my heart O God, by taking the fragmented broken parts of our lives and making us whole, by giving us shalom.. Give me an undivided heart. Why? Because we are a mess. As Paul describes in Romans 7, what I want is at odds with what I believe which is at odds with what I do.

Teach me, O God, to love you above all else.

We don't learn to love as God loves by squashing other loves. Lesser love lose their power as idols when the One great love rules them all, when we focus our united hearts, our whole being in love for God. Lust for God disempowers lust for sin and our idols. When the One great love rules them all, lesser loves are not eradicated, but are freed to flourish as they bring truth, beauty, and goodness into our lives.

The sins and distractions that cling so easily to me – the writer of Hebrews calls us to strip away the sins that cling to us. It is displacement of loves as we fix our eyes on Jesus who has suffered and endured in love for us. But it's often hard. O that I could brush away my idols like leaves fallen on the hood of my car.

O Lord, what must I do to have this undivided heart? This love to conquer and displace all other loves.

It is a gift. Our covenant God says (Ez 36), "I have given you a new heart"... one that makes you more alive than you've ever been.

As Ireneus wrote: The glory of God is man fully alive.

Christ has died to forgive you of your sin

Christ has risen from the dead to give you new life so that you may live all of life to the glory of God who is our hearts desire. Our victory begins by believing this good news

The answer to lust is not more discipline, although practical measures, habits and boundaries, are wise and prudent. The solution is not to suppress desire. The answer is to let God conquer our hearts and make them fully alive. This is the upside down Kingdom of God. How do we find ourselves? By giving ourselves away. By praying that prayer which Jesus prayed on the night he was betrayed, "Father, not my will, but may your will be done in my life."

The ground on which we walk... every blade of grass... every dish in the sink, every paper on your desk, every terabyte in your computer, molecule in your petri dish, every student in your classroom, every thing we do and every where we go... it's all holy ground. It's all part of our sacred calling to live all of life for his glory

You have made us for yourself, prayed Augustin. Our hearts are restless... driven by lust and misdirected desire... until they find rest... shalom... home... until we find our hearts true desire in you.