

God's Rest (Part 3)

Lust Destroys Peace
John W. Ritenbaugh
Given 26-May-01; Sermon #503

This sermon has a direct connection to the previous one I had given in that it touches on the subject of a peaceful sense of well-being within which all of us desire to live our lives.

The last sermon focused on the fact that the basic source of peace lies in doing the will of God. We saw in Genesis 1 and 2 that even God Himself is shown as deriving satisfaction and rest, that is, a sense of well-being and peace from carrying out His *own* will. This is not hard to understand. Think of the sense that you feel when you accomplish some goal that you planned to do for a long time. I think that you will agree that it is a very good feeling.

In like manner for us, Psalm 119:165 says, "Great peace have they which love thy law; and nothing shall offend them." This psalm was really the high point or climax of that previous sermon in that it says "great peace." Not just peace, but "*Great peace* have they which love God's law; and nothing shall cause them to stumble."

In the conclusion to that sermon we saw that the word "love" and "law" encompass a great deal more than one would expect just from a casual reading of that psalm. The word "psalm" encompasses the entire Bible within its scope, because the basic meaning of the word is "instruction." "Great peace have they which love God's instruction." The word "love" includes both duty and a strong sense of affectionate trust that arises when one knows another's good character from a long and a close association.

The fruit of this combination is that there is no cause of stumbling in those who meet those requirements. This is a wonderful, wonderful promise. We stumble. That is, we sin when we are lured into transgressing God's Word by temptation that we fail to recognize, or even when we recognize it we fail to resist and overcome.

This verse is strongly implying that the temptation to stumble into sin will fade from those who truly love God and His word. This kind of peace is not merely peace. It is *great* peace.

Psalm 19:7-11 The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is your servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

What we have here is a shortened version of the entire Psalm 119. Law, testimonies, statutes, commandments, and judgments are all mentioned so that one can get a sense of the whole Bible. I want you to notice—just like in Psalm 119:165 where it says "great peace"—in the keeping of these there is *great reward*. In looking at that a little bit closer, I want you to notice the modifiers that are given in those four or five verses: *perfect; sure; pure; clean; true; righteous; sweet*. Seven of them are listed here. Now notice the fruits that are given:

Healing (That is what the word "converting" means. If you look in the margin of your Bible it probably says, "healing." It heals the mind.); *Wisdom* ("Wisdom is the main thing," Solomon said.); *Joy* (Does that not feed into peace?); *Enlightening* (That is, giving understanding.); *Gold* (Precious.); *Enduring*; *Warning*; *Reward*.

These are all encouragement to get us to obey, to submit, to the Word of God.

The restlessness of this world, the restlessness of the competitive spirit that pervades this world, is directly attributable to Satan and to sin. He is at war against God, against you, and upon every aspect of God's creation. He is a destroyer, and in the process of his destructive effort against us he destroys peace by means of our having too close a relationship with him. To be enabled to resist him, or to cast off his influence, gives peace a chance to be produced.

We are going to look at one of the ploys very frequently used to upset our sense of well-being. He has lured the whole world into believing that material things, power, social position, and prestige are necessary for satisfaction with life, but I want us to notice God's warning.

I John 2:12-17 I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him that is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he that does the will of God abides forever.

We are beginning to see a pattern here: "Great peace have they which love God's law." There is great reward in loving God's commandments. He that does the will of God abides forever.

What John says here about "Love not the world," is a broad generality of course, but it does point us in the right direction regarding the direction, hopes, and therefore the effort that we should put into achieving our heart's desires. I want you to think back on the way John addressed these people: *children*; *young men*; *fathers*, among a couple of others. By doing it this way he addresses everybody across the whole spectrum of the congregation.

Whatever level of spiritual maturity or of responsibility within the congregation, they are gathered within what he says there. He is doing this because he wants everybody to understand that nobody is exempt from loving the world. Anybody can get caught up in it if we are not careful. He is warning everybody in the congregation that the sense of well-being we want is not to be found either in the world or in the world's material things.

God is warning us then in I John 2 that the world, as an organized system, only intensifies *wrong* misdirected desires. While the world is necessary for life, using its ways as the basis for life is destructive. We must be in it, but we must not be of it. So how can one be warned and know when he is coveting, when he is lusting, so that he might turn aside to far more productive efforts at achieving peace?

Everybody wants to be at peace. There are some jaded fools who love to make war. They are completely captivated by the spirit of Satan, and that is the way that they want to live. We might go so far as to say maybe the whole world is caught up in it. The whole world *is* caught up into that spirit to some degree, but on the other hand, the whole world wants to have peace. They want it their way. You can know that the world is going to strive to achieve its way, because that's all it knows, and so it is going to follow that spirit. We are not to be that way, and yet we are subject to being lured into *thinking* that way, because first of all we brought it into the church with us, and so it is lying within us, latent to some degree, and therefore willing to spring out again and take advantage of us. How can we know that we are drifting into the wrong area with our thinking? The Bible gives us some pretty clear direction.

I Timothy 6:9-10 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil; for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Paul basically said the intense pursuit of a wrong desire produces fruit that is hurtful. Twice in those two brief verses Paul mentions *pain* as the product of lust. Is not pain a warning that something is wrong? The pain can be in the mind, or the pain can be in the body, or it can be in both places at the same time. Anybody who is in pain recognizes that something is wrong somewhere, and the "curse causeless shall not come."—pain being the curse. Nobody wants pain. It is a curse, and the Proverbs tell us the "the curse causeless shall not come." There is a cause, and we are being taught, we are being trained, to look for causes of pain, and so Paul has immediately associated lust, coveting, with pain.

Martin Collins recently gave a sermon where he talked about leprosy, and we learned that one of the most dangerous aspects of leprosy is that it inhibits the feeling of pain. Because of that, the person with leprosy is not warned that he is doing something wrong. In like manner, God has provided pain in sin, that we might be warned and turn away from it. Lust is going to produce pain in the hopes that we will be warned and turn away before something else happens. Pain in some form is going to be produced whenever lust is involved. It may begin with a guilty conscience. It is just in the mind at this time, and develops from there.

There are several interesting things in these two verses. The first thing I want you to note is that lust takes one into exactly 180 degrees different direction from what Psalm 119:165 shows. When lust is involved, temptation does not diminish. Lusting people fall *into* temptation. That is what it says. "They that will be rich fall into temptation." The *desire to be rich* here is the illustration. Just understand that. Riches of themselves are neutral, but *aspiring* to be rich, and therefore directing one's life in that direction, is lusting after it, and they are going to fall into temptation. Temptation is not going to diminish if there is lust involved. Temptation is going to intensify. So, "Watch out!" is the warning here.

The implication is that unchecked lust tends to produce other lusts and other sins. The only way that I can think of this occurring is that feeding a lust is to produce a way of thinking in which lust becomes *normal* for that person. That is, if lust remains unchecked, it tends to produce a mind-set in which one lusts for *everything*. In other words, one kind of craving leads to another. Paul is saying that there is an addictive quality to lust, and as a snare keeps an animal entrapped, so does lust. An ungoverned passion grips a person in its tentacles like an octopus, and drags the person along.

In Amos 2:6 God had recorded for us an example of a people who were *addicted* to lust. Notice first of all that this is written against Israel. Understand that Amos prophesied roughly forty years before Israel fell to the Assyrians. He was sent by God to Israel, you might say, to give them one final warning, and then God gave them forty years to turn themselves around, but they did not do it.

I think you know the pattern at the beginning of the book of Amos where He says, "For three transgressions, or for four." It is just a way of saying, "These are the main issues that I have against you. It is not the only sins, but these are the main issues." What was the main issue against Israel?

Amos 2:6 Thus says the Lord; For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away its punishment; because they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals.

Do you understand what He is talking about here? He is talking about a craving for material things that is so strong these people will do *anything* to get it—to get money, to get ahead in society. They sold the righteous for silver. Slavery. They sold the poor for a pair of shoes. Do you think God is exaggerating? Wait till you see the next one!

Amos 2:7 They pant after the dust of the earth . . .

Can you understand somebody lusting by panting? "They pant after the dust of the earth!" What a vivid illustration! Is there anything more worthless in this sense than dirt? It is all over the place. Anybody can have as much as he wants, you might say. But the cravings of the people to have things that they did not have, or to have things that belong to somebody else, had gotten to the place where God illustrated it through "they desired even the dirt of the ground,"—the dust; not even the dirt that would grow something; just the dust that blows through the air.

I want you to think about this, because this is the very direction the United States of America is moving, where the lust to do things is so great, and to lust to have what others have. The people are getting to the place where nothing will stop them. God is admonishing an entire nation generally given over to cravings that it feels necessary to carry out so that they can have what it is they desire.

Proverbs 28:20 A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that hastens to be rich will not go unpunished.

God is promising that those who follow the principle here of making haste and striving for anything for the wrong desire, is wrong. God is promising there will be pain. "They shall not go unpunished."

Before we go any further, please understand that the Bible is not saying that desire of and by itself is evil. Desire is neutral, even as material things of and by themselves are neutral, and nowhere is God criticizing the desire for necessary things in the necessary amount. It is *what* and *how much* we desire, in combination with how we think and work toward achieving those desires. It is the desire to be rich—that is, to create over-abundance for the self, that is of concern here.

Why such strong admonishments against this sin? The answer is that this sin never walks alone. This sin has a powerful tendency to produce other sins because its tendency is to so effectively give birth to a way of thinking entirely bent on self-centeredness and self-gratification, and so one kind of craving easily leads to another. The person who craves to be rich also tends to crave public honor, popularity, power, and a life of ease and of satisfaction of all of the desires of the flesh.

There was one commentator that brought out something interesting in this verse that is unseen in the English. The one I am going to give came out of *The New Testament Commentary* by Hendriksen and Kistemaker. The commentator said that I Timothy 6:9 contains an alliteration using the letter "P." Alliteration is a play on words, all beginning with the same letter. All of you are very familiar with some alliterations, such as: "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers." That is alliteration, and it is used in this case to produce a tongue twister.

I Timothy 6:9 contains an alliteration, just like "Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers," using the letter "P." Alliteration is usually done to produce something humorous or to bring an emphasis that otherwise would not be possible. In order to achieve this in English, the commentator translated Paul's sentence like this, with the alliteration of the letter "P."

Those who desire to be opulent precipitate themselves into evil promptings and perilous pitfalls and into numerous precarious passions and plunge themselves into ruin and destruction.

What we find here is that the fruit of desiring the wrong things causes people to stumble and fall into temptation, entrapping themselves in numerous senseless and hurtful cravings, and finally plunge themselves into ruin and destruction.

Paul is not done yet defining the evil fruit, because in verse 10 he continues showing that lust is the conduit for other evil manifestations. He says that "The love of riches is a root of all kinds [or all sorts] of evil."

Once again, then, we see this propensity—the leavening effect—to produce other evil, or we might say "harmful fruit." The desire for wealth has been the root cause of innumerable wars, murders, fraudulent scams, divorces, marriages, perjuries, hypocrisies, and poisonings throughout history.

When lust occurs within church members, Paul says that they have allowed themselves to *wander* from the faith.

The word "air" is the same word that is applied to the word "planet" in Greek. The heavenly body, planet, means "wanderer" in Greek. The Greek, looking up into the sky, saw that the stars, as far as he was able to see, are in a fixed position. On the other hand, planets *wander* all over the place in their circuit. It is a matter of comparison. Planet in Greek means "a wanderer," and so Paul used that word to indicate that somebody in the church who is lusting is wandering away from the path—the path that is so aptly described in Psalm 119. The whole series there is describing the way of life of God.

In the Greek, the New Testament word for the English word "trespass" is *paraptoma*, and it means, "to turn aside." It means to deviate from the path, or the way. In other words, Paul is saying to stay on the path is peace and safety; but to deviate from it is dangerous and painful.

Notice what Paul says a person who aspires for what he should not or cannot lawfully have, wanders from. What is it? *The faith*. He wanders from "the faith." Faith is used here in the sense of a body of beliefs as taught by the church. It means, as we used to say back in the old days—back in the 50s, 60s, and maybe even up into the 70s as well—that the person would be wandering from *the truth*.

Those who have allowed themselves to lust have wandered from the truth, and they have "pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Do you know what Paul would probably say today? What he said then was fit for modern warfare. It would be like a person who had a spear in his hand and he punched himself right through the foot. What would we say today? "He shot himself in the foot!" And so a person who lusts, Paul said, is shooting himself in the foot. Is that not vivid? Shooting himself! He is inflicting the damage upon himself. He cannot blame anybody else for this sin. Nobody! It is entirely generated from within. The lusting man cannot blame the woman that he is lusting after. Do you get the point? It is his fault entirely.

Do you see what Paul is saying here in an overall sense? Lust is the precursor of a multitude of other sins. Lust is a sin that occurs completely within the self. It is hidden from the outside world, but almost immediately begins inflicting its own pain and damage on the person. Unless it is checked, it moves on to the outside to sins that can be clearly seen, and these in turn multiply the intensity of the sorrows inflicted on the sinner.

What kind of sorrow, pain, is lust itself capable of producing within a person so that he can be warned? Lust is capable of producing every one of these that I am going to say. I am not saying that it produces every one at the same time within the same person, but it usually begins, with us, with a guilty conscience.

Sorrow or pain that lust is capable of producing within a person:

A guilty conscience. There is no peace in a guilty conscience.

Restlessness. The mind is not at peace because that lust needs to be gratified.

Depression. Because the lust cannot be satisfied, we begin to get depressed.

Fretful anxiety.

Boredom. "Oh if I only could have that thing my life would be fulfilled!"

An intense sense of victimization.

Dissatisfaction with life.

Gloom. Feelings of grief and dejection.

Agitation of being singled out for persecution.

Torment. It produces feelings of disturbance.

Troubled. Feeling that one is being cheated, ungratified, and unfilled.

It is just the kind of mindset that drives a person to relieve those tormenting feelings and seek gratification, escaping from them by relieving the pressure on the mind for a short time through what will invariably be another sin. Pain upon pain that begins with us shooting ourselves in the foot.

Matthew 5:27-28 You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you, that whosoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

See, we are already sinning. Jesus used this to illustrate that there is more to the sin of adultery than the literal act. Lust is the precursor of adultery when a person, man or woman, is looking after, is gazing, staring, aspiring after. I am using some of the words that could have been used by Paul. In fact he used the word "aspire" in I Timothy 6:9 where he said, "Those who aspire to be rich." It is this drive that creates the lust. You see, the process does not end with adultery. It is also the precursor of murder, of rape, of stealing, of lying, because there is no restful peace in covetousness. There is only pain and sorrow, because the intense feelings will return again and again, seeking unlawful gratification or relief from the psychological pressures in one's mind.

James 1:12-16 Blessed is the man that endures temptation [or testing]: for when he has been approved, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires, and enticed. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren.

This series of verses only hints at the suffering attached to lusting through the word "death." It does that through knowing that when you read that, you will understand that death is frequently preceded by a period of suffering. The end result though is to die. But it does clearly show in this series of verses that there is a step-by-step process involved in sin that frequently has its beginning in an uncontrolled desire. You see, lust conceives, which shows that there is a process.

There is a time when the ideas that one wants to accomplish or feel gratified by begin to come together and so a conception is made. Of and by itself at the beginning, the desire is neutral, but it will continue to grow if we play with it and do not do something about resisting it or getting rid of the thought. And so, when lust has conceived, it brings forth death. There is a step-by-step process here. It has conceived whenever the desire becomes uncontrolled. The place for us to stop it is before it ever gets to this point, as we will see.

There is something else here, and that is this series of verses shows that a person who endures the test that comes his way is blessed. It says, "He shall receive the crown of life."

Now what is this *crown of life*? Crown is usually associated as a symbol of royalty, but here it is not associated with royalty at all. It is associated with life. It is "the crown of life," not the "crown of royalty." It is not a crown of position. It is a crown of life. The blessed person who receives this crown of life receives it because he rightly handles trials, and is the man who finds his joy and peace in God and in God's way, and not the way that the world blesses people with its version of "quality of life." It is the person who resists and fights out the desire in order to *do* God's way. Psalm 119:165 says there is a *great reward* that awaits that person. Temptation will diminish. Sin becomes less of a problem.

If one follows God's way, there is great reward, according to Psalm 119, because it gives wisdom. It gives healing and so forth. Now James is saying that if a person comes through this trial and resists lust, he is given the reward. The reward is the "crown of life."

Jesus said, "My peace I give to you, *not as the world gives*, give I to you." How does the world give peace? The world gives peace through riches, other material things, fame and fortune, position in society. That is the way the world "rewards" those who go the way of the world as directed by the spirit that is driving this world. It makes people aspire for material gratification and things. But God says, "That's not the way I'm going to do it." The peace that He is going to give is given to those who aspire to the things of God, and put their hopes and dreams, their trust and submission in going God's way. Of course, with that will come peace.

The word "crown" means pinnacle. We say, "the crown of the hill." It is what royalty wears on the top of its head. Now this is the *pinnacle*, not of royalty, but the pinnacle of *life!* That is what the person is going to be rewarded with. What is the pinnacle of life? It is life that is lived the way God lives it. That quality of life is called in the Bible *eternal life*. That is the term for the way that God lives life. God lives eternal life everlastingly—forever and ever.

What God is creating in us is the ability to live life as He lives life, and only those who live life the way that God lives life are going to be rewarded with the *crown of life*. In other words, James is promising us that if we endure these trials and do not let them develop into lust for something, we are going to be enabled, we are going to be rewarded, with the ability to live life as God lives life. These are the ones that God will choose to live everlastingly with Him because they live life, they look at life, they use life the same way that He does.

The Bible contradicts the world's way pure and simple by saying that an abundant and joyful life comes through being blessed through the relationship with God and submission to His will. Everywhere we look we keep coming back to the same answer: "Great peace have those who love Your law," and so forth.

Matthew 18:7 Woe to the world because of offenses [or causes of stumbling]!

If you will look in your Bible margin, it will say for offenses, "causes of stumbling." We are getting on familiar ground here. "Woe to the world because of stumbling."

Matthew 18:7-9 Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses [causes of stumbling] must come; but woe to that man by whom the offense comes! If your hand or your foot causes you [that is, being a cause of stumbling] to sin, cut it off, and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

This is a parallel of what Jesus said in Matthew 5:29-30, right after the lusting and adultery illustration He gave there, but it is in a different setting. Jesus' advice is that if your right eye lures you into sin through lust, fling it away. That is closer to what He said. Fling it away. We are to understand that this is not to be taken literally, because should we literally do this, we can still lust with our left eye. The problem is elsewhere. The problem is in the heart, and the solution is in a change of heart.

What Jesus is getting at here is He is teaching that sin in any form is destructive and painful and not to be fooled around with. Drastic action must be taken to get rid of whatever comes in the natural course of life that tempts us toward sin, because the best place to stop the sin is in the lust that

precedes it. That is the easiest place to stop it, because once it gets moving it is probably going to pull you right along with it.

Without saying it directly, Jesus is saying that we must never forget that we are destined for eternity, and that nothing, no matter how precious it may seem at the moment (Now think how precious your right eye is, or think how precious your right hand is), should be allowed to doom our glorious future, because that is where the final fulfillment of the crown of life lies.

It is certainly possible for us, by the enablement of God, to be able to achieve a very high quality abundant life. But what lies over the horizon in the resurrection of the dead is going to make what we have now, even as good as it might be, look pale by comparison. Paul said, "We look through a glass darkly," but what lies ahead is so superior our minds cannot encompass it. We can never forget that God, by His mercy, has destined us for eternity, but He is allowing trials, and sometimes He forms those trials for us. He wants to see what we are going to be doing with it. Sin, being a very destructive force, must not be pampered. It must be put to death.

Colossians 3:5 Therefore put to death your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.

Covetousness is idolatry, and self-gratification is the idol. He is saying that dilly-dallying is deadly. He is saying that halfway measures wreak havoc. In the war against sin, the surgery must be radical. We must fight hard, because merely shadowboxing, as Paul said in I Corinthians 9:26-27, will never bring victory. This is why Jesus said that "violent men take the Kingdom of God by force." The violence is not against others. It is against the self, by means of fighting the temptation and enticements to sin within the self.

We are going to take a look at a couple of examples in the Old Testament where lust played a major part.

I Kings 21:1-16 And it came to pass after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me your vineyard that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give you for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to you, I will give you the worth of it in money. And Naboth said to Ahab, The Lord forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto you. And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread. But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is your spirit so sad that you eat no bread? And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it please you, I will give you another vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give you my vineyard. And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Do you now govern the kingdom of Israel? Arise, and eat bread, and let your heart be merry: I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, dwelling with Naboth. And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people: And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, You did blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him, that he may

die. And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, and as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them. They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people. And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead. And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead. And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

Naboth was on solid legal ground in his refusal to sell or to barter his inheritance for another plot of ground. You can get that right out of Leviticus 25. Ahab so desired, lusted after this particular land, and look what it produced. He went into a sullen indignant child-like funk, even refusing to eat. "Oh, pay attention to me!" This was the *king* acting like a spoiled brat. Probably all of his life he got things by doing things similar to this, pulling an emotional child-like tantrum, crying and making people feel sorry for him.

Tell me something. Was there peace in Ahab's mind? The lust was producing its evil fruit, and so from that lustful beginning came political intrigue, religious intrigue, hypocrisy, lying, and the murder of an innocent man and his son. It is not mentioned here, but in II Kings 9:26 it says that his sons were killed too. Do you know why they had to be killed? Because if they were still alive there was an heir for the property. It does not say how many others were killed. There may have been grandsons killed as well. They had to kill anybody who could legally inherit that piece of property, and it started with a desire.

Do you see how clearly that is shown in God's Word, that one sin leads on another? How well this incident revealed that those in positions of great power are not innocent of the same kind of feelings and emotional immaturity as the most common person in the land. Lust can be the driving force regardless of a person's wealth, material possessions, education, or state in life. Do you know what happens? When a person reaches a pinnacle that he set before, he just notches it up a little bit higher, or maybe a great deal higher. One million dollars is not enough, so he goes for two. Then two is not enough, so he goes for five. Then five is not enough. Do you get the point? There is no stopping it.

Human nature is insatiable because there is no solution to sin that is given for anything material, any position, to satisfy. "My peace I give to you, not as the world gives." The world gives peace, but it only lasts for a little while.

II Samuel 13:1-2 After this Absalom the son of David had a lovely sister, whose name was Tamar; and Amnon the son of David loved her. Amnon was so distressed [troubled, disturbed] over his sister Tamar that he became sick; for she was a virgin. And it was improper for him to do anything to her.

It is not unusual that Amnon would "fall in love" with Tamar. She is described as being beautiful, but as a virgin she is protected territory, and she is strictly off limits. Now Amnon does not love her, because true love does not produce these sorts of negative results. He is *lusting* for her, and he became so distressed, so frustrated, that he got haggard looking and sick.

It is interesting to note in passing here that the people involved in this section of the story are David, Absalom, and Amnon. They are people that we might casually judge as *having it all*. They had power. They had position. They had money. They had fame. They had looks. David is described as handsome. Absalom is described as handsome. Tamar is described as beautiful. I do not think that Bathsheba lacked in that way either, and it is very likely that Amnon was a handsome man as well. David seemed to produce unusually good-looking children, because David undoubtedly had available to him the most beautiful women in the land. In fact it does say Abigail was beautiful.

Are you getting the idea? Michal was a good-looking girl. And so you have these beautiful people marrying one another, but that did not solve a thing as far as lust is concerned. Those things did not protect them from lusting, because all are subject to the persuasions of desire that one already possesses, and those so blessed like David and his family were to bear the responsibility by God of controlling them and using them rightly. Another thing to consider is that neither did Tamar's beauty or her position within the royal family protect her from the destructive result of sin. In this case, it was not her sin, but somebody else's.

II Samuel 13:3-6 But Amnon had a friend, whose name was Jonadab, the son of Shimeah, David's brother; and Jonadab was a very crafty man. And he said to him, "Why are you, the king's son, becoming thinner day after day? Will you not tell me?" Amnon said to him, "I love Tamar, my brother Absalom's sister." So Jonadab said to him, "Lie down on your bed, and and pretend to be ill, and when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and give me food, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see it, and eat it from her hand.' " So Amnon lay down, and pretended to be ill and when the king was come to see him, Amnon said to the king, "Please let Tamar my sister come, and make me a couple of cakes for me in my sight, that I may eat from her hand."

We are beginning to see it build. Intrigue and deceitful trickery are the second fruits as the leaven of Amnon's lust continues its deadly course.

II Samuel 13:11-14 And when she had brought them to him to eat, he took hold of her, and said to her, "Come lie with me, my sister." And she answered him, "No, my brother, do not force me; for no such thing should be done in Israel: Do not do this disgraceful thing! And I, where could I take my shame? And as for you, you would be like one of the fools of Israel. Now therefore, please speak to the king; for he will not withhold me from you." However, he would not heed her voice; but being stronger than she, he forced her and lay with her.

The third fruit appears, as Tamar is raped, and now she must carry that psychological and physical scar the rest of her life.

II Samuel 13:15-17 Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, "Arise, be gone!" And she said to him, No, indeed! This evil of sending me away is worse than the other that you did to me." But he would not listen to her. Then he called his servant who attended him, and said, "Here! Put now this woman out, away from me, and bolt the door behind her."

The fourth fruit rears its ugly head, because now Amnon does not merely find her less satisfying than his evil lust demanded, he *hates* her exceedingly, and has her thrown out of his presence as if she was a common street walker, thus adding insult to injury. You see, one step at a time, the sin that could have been stopped with the lust, begins to leaven everything it touches, and we are not done yet.

II Samuel 13:18-19 Now she had on a robe of many colors; for the king's virgin daughters wore such apparel. And his servant bore her out and bolted the door behind her. And Tamar put ashes on her head, and tore her robe of many colors that was on her, and laid her hand on her head, and went away crying bitterly.

I am sure that Amnon kicked her out the way he did because he did not want her around reminding him of the awful deed that he had just perpetrated. How quickly the sin began turning against him. This also tends to show that when lust is involved, realization of the desire is less than expectation. The payoff is never what we think it will be. Tamar's crushed emotional state is amply described there in verses 18 and 19, and then the next fruit occurs in verses 20 and 21.

II Samuel 13:20-21 And Absalom her brother said to her, "Has Amnon your brother been with you? But hold now your peace, my sister; he is your brother; do not take this thing to heart." So Tamar remained desolate in her brother Absalom's house. But when King David heard all these things, he was very angry.

It could easily be written, "King David was *furious* !" The shrewd Absalom counseled her to bide her time. But what did David do? Nothing. Do you know why? Because David had done something very similar as Amnon, although rape was not involved. David was paralyzed by his own sin. It would be the pot calling the kettle black. The story does not end there, because the leaven of this sin kept spreading, creating more and more sorrow.

In the following verses, more deceitful intrigue was born as Absalom took advantage of the situation to continue his own lustful campaign to usurp David as being the king. Absalom had arranged to have Amnon killed at a family reunion. Again, David was furious and deeply sorrowful because of some wrong information given him that *all* the king's sons were dead. But again David did nothing. He was paralyzed because he was guilty of the murder of Uriah.

The sins are becoming enmeshed. One thing leads to another, and if there is sin right at the top, what is going to happen underneath? Lust is a powerful incentive to other sins, and it immediately begins producing evil right within the person. Sorrow and pain result. It is like opening up Pandora's box though whenever the sin is allowed to break forth from outside the heart into the other world, as we might say, and begin creating other sins in its path—and it will. That is why I said that this sin never walks alone. It is the precursor of the other sins that are following.

Proverbs 10:22 The blessing of the Lord [the *crown of life*, the peace that Christ can give us] makes one rich and he adds no sorrow with it.

What a promise! Peace comes with it. Lust gives warnings. Mental agitation, restlessness, feelings of grief, unfulfilled expectation, dissatisfaction with life, even torment at feeling cheated and victimized are all fruits of lust as it builds toward producing another sin.

There is no reason why we cannot be warned at the very beginning of the course of sin if we are alert to the fruit that our desires are producing. If they fall in line with the evil fruit that I mentioned in this sermon, it is time to do something before that lust, that desire, breaks out into something far worse.