



The Battle to a “Beautiful Mind” ***Waging War against Lustful Thoughts***

by Ed Buch

A lustful thought is like a torpedo, cruising relentlessly, silently under the water, straight toward the hull of our ship. Unless we take instant evasive action, we’re in trouble. Eventually that thought will strike.

We tend to minimize the impact. In fact, most of us believe we’re spiritually stalwart enough to take a few hits. But the truth is we can’t afford to let any lustful thoughts into our minds. We can’t let them linger, even for a few seconds. That little opening is all the Enemy needs; he is very adept at slithering in through the smallest of openings. He knows how to exploit that one little opening until it is a gaping hole in your spiritual armor.

If I sound like I’m speaking from experience, it’s because I am. I’ve had to learn these things the hard way.

Most of us know what it’s like to finish committing some act of sin, say masturbation, and then immediately begin to question ourselves: *How did that happen? What went wrong? I was doing fine, then all of a sudden, IT happened.* Be assured, IT began as a tiny, silent thought in your mind.

We tend to pay little attention to the thoughts that come into our minds. Some come and go so quickly we couldn’t voice them or act on them if we wanted to. But others linger. Some entice and tantalize. Some are sinful. Some are so blatantly sensual that we would be massively ashamed to have them played on a screen for others to see.

For those who have once given over to sexual sin, it is these lustful thoughts in particular that seem so hard to overcome. Long after men (or women) stop acting out sexually, they still admit to having a seemingly constant battle with lustful thoughts. Some will give up and eventually backslide into their former sexual sins. But others will press through to the victory that is found in Christ Jesus.

Let me assure you: there is victory in Jesus Christ over impure thoughts!

To be frank, the major problem on the road to victory over lustful thoughts is that we don’t really want them to go away. There is still that thing in us—that desire for sin—that welcomes a lustful thought now and then. We want to re-live the excitement and pleasure of past trysts—even if

only for a few minutes in our minds. But yielding to such temporal pleasure has far more devastating consequences than we realize.

I've also learned that success doesn't come in the form of some secret formula that stifles lustful thoughts, or an end-around play guaranteed to produce instant victory. There is no such shortcut that I'm aware of. Lustful thoughts are overcome one by one, thought by thought.

I realize that doesn't have much appeal to the pop-Christianity crowd. But that's the way it is. It's not a glamorous walk down the fashion-model runway; it's hand-to-hand combat in the trenches. Such battles are the proving ground of your proclamation of faith. Are you willing to fend off those pesky lustful thoughts and fill your mind with Jesus?

If you are really serious about this battle, there are several things you must do to assure victory. The first is what I refer to as "breaking the trance." When lustful thoughts start to arise in your minds and fantasies begin to swirl around, you need to do something outwardly to break that momentum toward sin. The situation you're in is likely too conducive to lustful thoughts, and something needs to immediately change. If you're watching television or using the computer, turn it off. I find it helpful to get up and take a short walk, even just a walk around the house is often enough to help me get my thoughts redirected.

Colossians 3:5 says, "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry." What does this mean? It means to stop feeding that thing. Any living thing that is not fed will eventually die, or at least lose its power.

Secondly, PRAY! We neglect the weapon of prayer far too often. The truth is, you and I don't have what it takes to win the battle against lustful thoughts and the sin they will lead us into. You need help from outside yourself; you need the Lord's help. The Word of God instructs us to take our thoughts captive (II Corinthians 10:5), and the best way I know to do that is to pray. It is impossible to pray and think lustful thoughts at the same time. Prayer is also the means by which we appropriate the power to overcome sin.

If you lack the discipline to pray, then call a family member, a friend, or a spiritual mentor who can pray with you. Humble yourself and confess your need for prayer to overcome these lustful thoughts. Such humility opens the door for God's favor. Remember, God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. (I Peter 5:5)

Third, get serious about applying the admonition given by the apostle Paul: "Do not be conformed to this world." (Romans 12:2a) Too often our homes are filled with the very things that stimulate lustful thoughts because we've conformed to the world's standard in what we allow into our homes. Need I even mention television as the obvious source of much that makes provision for our flesh while crushing our spiritual life? But don't stop there. Take a closer look at those catalogs and magazines filled with glossy advertising based on sensual appeals. Could they be one of the reasons your battle with lustful thoughts seems so unwinnable? A good housecleaning could go a long way toward making your home the sanctuary you need it to be to escape the onslaught of sensual propaganda the world hurls at you.

But ultimately, these three steps will not produce lasting victory over lustful thoughts. They will help in the short term, but they need to go hand-in-hand with a long-term transformation of your mind.

Romans 12:2b goes on to say "...but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Be transformed? What does it mean to have to have a renewed and transformed mind?

A transformed mind is one that draws its thoughts and motives from an increasingly vibrant relationship with God. Any time you "put off the old," you must also "put on the new" (Ephesians 4:22, 24). Hollow and deceptive fantasies need to be replaced by something more wonderful. If you do, the Scriptures promise that you will "be renewed in the spirit of your mind." (Ephesians 4:23)

A new and transformed mind is filled with thoughts of Jesus and His love as it was revealed on the Cross. A transformed mind meditates day and night on the life and power available through His Word. A transformed mind causes the flow of your life to be reversed, so that instead of everything flowing toward you—your wants being preeminent and your desires being catered to—things are flowing toward others. You must come to a place where you are truly putting others ahead of yourself. In the same way you once gave over to lust, you must be given over to meeting the needs of others.

God wants to renew and transform our minds. He wants to transform our ugly, self-centered, lust-filled minds and give each one of us a "beautiful mind," one that truly pleases and glorifies Him.

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