

Back around Thanksgiving when Victory of the Lamb was still meeting in the movie theater time I went to see the movie Creed. The movie is about a young man named, Donnie Johnson, whose father is the boxer Apollo Creed. Donnie Johnson is inwardly motivated to quit his job and become a boxer himself. Making a name for himself rather than riding in on the name of his father. As the movie progresses he gets the famous Rocky Balboa to be his trainer. In the midst of all these training and fighting scenes, Donnie falls for a girl and then the movie has a couple of intimate scenes. I remember looking away from the screen at that time thinking this is not what I came for. This has nothing to do with the plot of the movie. (Poster of Creeds fades out) But here is what you already know, you and I live in a sexed crazed culture. And so almost every TV channel we turn to, almost every movie we go to, almost every song we listen to, almost every sporting event we go to, with almost every mouse click there is an opportunity for a reference to sex. Sex inside of marriage is great. Sex outside of marriage is sinful and destructive. Immoral sex is something that every sinful heart is prone to struggle with in some way or another. Back in Corinth the teaching about sexual immorality and prostitutes was especially important because the temple of the love-goddess Aphrodite was in Corinth. The temple employed more than a thousand prostitutes as priestesses, and sex was a part of worship ritual. And into the Corinthian culture and ours, into this day and this setting and in our lives God still has his word for us, 1 Corinthians 6:18 **Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body.**¹⁹ **Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;**²⁰ **you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.** With these words Paul clearly stated that Christians are to have no part in sexual immorality, even if it is acceptable and popular in our culture. The great reformer defining the commandment you shall not commit adultery says: We should fear and love God so that we lead a pure and decent life in all we think, say, and do, and that husband and wife love and honor each other. With this commandment Jesus is not only protecting the sanctity of marriage but the sanctity of our hearts and minds as well. And that is nicely wrapped teaching for in church but what about the real world with all of its temptations?

Think of it this way: Let's say you like chocolate, I mean you really like it. What would you do if I told you that I have a bag of Hershey Chocolate Kisses to hand out? Would you be among the first to bound up here for one...or two? I think you would change your mind pretty quickly, however, if you saw that before I gave away a chocolate I unwrapped it, popped it into my mouth, sucked on it for a bit, maybe to a bite out of it, and spit it out onto my hand? Pretty gross right. Well, that's the feeling God wants us to have about sex outside of marriage and that includes our hearts and our minds. Although today's teaching is one you may not want to hear or one that you figure you are going to end up black and blue from the shame that is going to be beating on you, hang tight because it is important because our purity, our **body honor** is under heavy attack and God has the solution that we all need for a path to follow and for forgiveness to be extended.

As I mentioned earlier, God is not only concerned about our actions but also our heart. The wisest man who ever lived said, "Above all else guard your hearts because it is the wellspring of life. (Proverbs 4:23) Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount: But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Adultery is hardly if ever simply an act of the flesh, it is about the heart and mind on a run-away mine train from God. James 1:14-15 **but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.** God knows that sin always cause a fracture. There is always a break in relationship, sometimes it is sudden and obvious sometimes it is more subtle like a break in honesty as in I have to hide this so no one finds out about it.

Pornography is sex outside of marriage and it is rampant today. At least one study is showing that ½ Christian men and 1/5 Christian women connect to porn at least once per month. I was driving home on Wednesday listening to sports radio and there was an advertisement about some triple X person going to be at some venue. I honestly don't recall hearing who and where, I just remember thinking that's going to cause a lot of pain not only to the people being entertained by sin but also by the performer. Pornography misshapes our vision whether we realize

it or not. Lyrics in Taylor's Swift's song Blank Space say "I'm a nightmare dressed up as a daydream. The eye beholds much good and evil in this life. Beholding leads to becoming. What we continually put before our eyes and minds will shape and determine who we are. One lustful look can change us. One look can feed the monster of our sinful nature within so that it rears up its ugly head looking for more. One look leads to another, and then to another and to another fantasy and to action. Here is the thing: If you steep your tea too long, it becomes bitter. Likewise, if you sit and soak in pornographic images or fantasies, your life will have a bitter taste. At first the flavors might taste sweet, but bitterness will always be the end result. Lust misshapes our vision whether we realize it or not because it is tweaking your heart one image, one thought, one memory, one act a time. And one day, that lust will affect your spouse or your future spouse. Lust distorts the glory of both biblical manhood and womanhood; it goes against the divine mandate in the garden of Eden. Satan's version of the Fall into sin today get's played out so often something like this: Did God really say you can't have sex? Our Christian response: No, we can have sex all we want with or spouse. But God did say if we have sex outside of marriage it will be the death of relationships. Satan: He didn't really mean that: Look at her. Look at him. Sex is really good no matter who you have it with. And so many of us, no, all of us have said in one way or another, Yep, you right it won't hurt, not one look, not one thought, not one act. It will be ok. It will not mess me or anyone else up.

Kristen Clark, is the co-founder of GirlDefinedMinistries has this story to tell from a women's perspective. I was at a local grocery store the other day in the checkout aisle when I saw her. I had ever seen anything this disturbing in my grocery store before. There she was, right in front of my eyes without a shirt on. I'm not exaggerating here. Thankfully she was wearing jeans . . . but she was shirtless. I glanced back and forth to see if anybody standing around me was as shocked as I was. Not a blink. Nobody seemed to care. Frustration began to well up inside of me. Why would a family friendly grocery store allow this shirtless woman to parade down the checkout aisle? There are little children and unsuspecting fathers being exposed to her nakedness. I finally made it out of the store and was shaken up to say the least. Where has our dignity gone as females . . . as a society? I thought to myself. As shocking as it was for me to see a topless woman in my grocery store, I am grateful for two things: 1. She was on a magazine cover and not there in person. 2. She was using her arm to partially cover her nakedness. She goes on to write: Ever since that day I have been thinking more and more about the whole idea of women's respect. As 21st century women, we verbally demand respect from the people around us and we get mad if we are not valued as dignified human beings. We want other people (especially men) to treat us with great respect, and yet, we don't even respect ourselves. . . . As Mary Kassian points out, Nowadays, there is little difference between the appearance of a prostitute and the appearance of what the world upholds as a sexy attractive, woman." Our world teaches women and young girls messages like: If you want to be hot, show what you've got. She goes on to say, The very thing most girls and women want is to be valued and respected, but sadly, that is the very thing we are throwing away. (You can read the whole article on my Facebook Homepage.

The devil doesn't climb the fence where it is the highest to get to you. He climbs it where it is the lowest. Sex outside of marriage is one of culture's greatest temptations. In other words, know your weakness. It is at our weakest that Satan will pull us to do something that we know is not right. And we often fall. Many pray to God, and make promises that they won't do it again only to fail and some lose hope. Titus 2:12 **It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,** What is the it? Not the consequences, not fear. The verse before tells us what is the it - **For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people.** Grace changes our human hearts. Looking for help look to God's grace. Looking for forgiveness looks to God's grace. Looking for hope look to God's grace. Looking for renewal look to God's grace. Looking for a second chance for the 14 billioneth time or more look to God's grace. Prayer is good. Considering the consequences is good but it is the grace of God that changes our human hearts. Grace gives our body honor.

Here is for future reference. Scripture says that Satan is like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. If you or I saw a roaring lion walking into our classroom, lunch room, neighborhood, or work place or any other place we

might be we would jump up and say to the lion: Here, kitty, kitty. Yet that is so often what we do when Satan comes with his lies about sexual sin. Playing with temptation is a little like running down a mountain side. Sooner or later your feet can keep up with you and you can't stop. If you are struggling with pornography a locked room with a computer is not a good place for you; if you are struggling with your Bathsheba or David then being alone with them is not a good place for you. **No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.** God will help us in our time of temptations. A story is told about a man who went to the king with a question. The question was how do I avoid temptation. The king said I will answer you but first you must do the task I give you. You must carry this cup of oil that is filled to the brim through the streets of the city and bring it back to me without a single drop spilled. But if you spill even a single drop you will be killed. So the man took the cup of oil and walked through the streets of the city. Needless to say he was very careful not to spill a single drop. He returned to the king with a full cup of oil. The king asked him: what did you see on the streets. Nothing the man replied I was only concerned about the oil. The king replied you now have your answer on how to avoid temptation. Translated for you and me keep your eyes on Jesus. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 6:22: **"The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light."** Look upon his face, and lust and all sin will begin to look strangely dim. Focus on Jesus and you won't see the temptation. Focus on Jesus who stretched out his arms on the cross for your sins. Focus on Jesus outstretched arms that are now welcoming you to him. Grace is greater than your past. Grace is greater than your will. God's grace brings your body honor!

Pray – the words of Be Thou My Vision

**Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that thou art -
thou my best thought, by day or by night;
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.**