

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; (1 Peter 2:11)

I once had an old guy claiming to be a preacher say to me that you shouldn't talk about sins specifically, because that educates people on all the bad things they could do, and you'd be responsible for encouraging them in their bad behavior. He was taking exception to the old 'Fag Sin' sign, and proceeded to tell me how he only speaks of repentance, never about sins when he's preaching. When I asked him how he could possibly preach repentance from sin without discussing what sin is, he quipped 'that's easy, everybody knows what sin is, so you don't need to teach them'.

When I stopped being amazed (I was a lot younger then) I asked what he did with Isaiah 58:1

"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."

He said "that's just to the Jews, and it's Old Testament preaching, not New Testament". So then I asked him what he did with verses like

"Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother."
(Mar 10:19)

Which is clearly Christ speaking, and he said 'oh, that's Christ talking about the commandments, not sin; us preachers nowadays have to tell people about the Gospel'. I won't bore you with the rest of this incredulous conversation, but suffice it to say that was a key moment for me realizing the preachers, especially in this nation, are all liars and have left off doing their jobs.

The job of the preacher is to use moral suasion to keep people from sin. In Paul's second Epistle to his dear friend and student Timothy, he tells him

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." (2Ti 4:2)

This is an instruction to Timothy as a preacher, an instructor of men, on what he ought to be doing with his time and how he ought to do it. He is instructed to preach when it is acceptable to his audience and when it is not. When it is popular and when it is unpopular, in other words. He is told to reprove, rebuke and exhort – that is to warn against, to admonish perpetrating and to encourage avoidance of sin! You can't do those things if you don't talk about the sins themselves.

The word translated 'preach' here means "*to herald (as a public crier), especially divine truth (the gospel)*". Thayer defines it as "*specifically used of the public proclamation of*

the gospel and matters pertaining to it, made by John the Baptist, by Jesus, by the apostles and other Christian teachers”.

So it seems pretty obvious to me that if you're going to preach in the style of John Baptist or Jesus, you're going to have to discuss sin. You can't preach repentance if you don't preach repentance from something. You can't repent of natural depravity, you can only repent of the sins you commit. It is the job of the preacher to make sure that people see their sins for what they are, and to rip back the garments they cover their sins with to expose them to the light of day.

That's the problem with the churches today. They've abrogated that duty. They'd rather put together choirs to sing military anthems and youth groups to host all night skating parties than just do the job – cry against sin and exhort obedience to God. They'll tell people 'Jesus Saves' but not what He is saving FROM!

This is the result of not treating the Bible like it's God's word and instead turning toward your own wisdom. The Bible is just another big business in this country, not the Word of God. These preachers at best cower and shy away from taking on the Devil and sin, and at worst work with him to re-define it, repeating his mantra “ye shall not surely die”.

Today, we will look in some detail at what it is our 'old man' (Rom 6:6) wants us to spend our precious time on – the pursuit of fleshly lusts which war against our souls. We will look at them and define them, so that we may hopefully better abstain from them.

Peter tells us

Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; (1 Peter 2:11)

He is in a mode of exhortation, encouraging us as pilgrims in this not to be drawn into its ways. He is telling us the exact opposite of “when in Rome, do as the Romans do”. He does NOT want us getting drawn into the sins of the citizens of this place, reminding us that this is not our home, and the behaviors of the place should shock, embarrass, and cause us to shy away from being like the people we live amongst.

Travelling internationally has given me some sense of this at a personal level. I've seen things in my traveling about that don't fit into my concept of 'normal', and just seeing them makes me feel completely out of place; they make me want my home even more. I'm only talking about cultural differences, not flaunting of sin. The ways of the world should make us feel wildly out of place; partaking in this world's 'normal' should be so foreign to our desires and wants that it drives us toward our God and our long home, not toward the sins that surround us.

The lusts of the flesh are enumerated in a few passages of Scripture, including this from Paul's letter to the Galatians, which is my focus list for today:

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Gal 5:19-21)

This kind of an enumeration of specific works, which are ‘manifest’ demonstrates the point for us. Part of reproof is to make sin ‘exceeding sinful’ (Rom 7:13). How do you do that if you don’t actually address what behavior is sinful? When Paul uses that phrase, ‘exceeding sinful’ in his letter to the Romans, he is being exceptionally emphatic, almost hyperbolic. The battle we face as preachers is to make it clear that the depraved actions of man (not just his natural depravity) are in fact sinful – not something to be proud of, not something that is simply a minor irritant to God, or a slight disappointment. These behaviors are **SINS**, and they send you to hell. We have an obligation to make it clear, all caps, bold, underline, italics that the things enumerated here and in other such spots, result in your eternal punishment. How can you say that emphatically enough? How can you make them blush who will not blush at their behavior (Jer 6:15)? How do you make them see that they should be deeply ashamed before the face of the Lord their God for their behavior?

You do the best you can by not thinking great thoughts – you read the words, and you say the words. Because here’s the thing. That word ‘manifest’ means shining, evident, apparent, known. The idea is that our very nature makes these things known, in our conscience, as sinful, which of course Scripture tells us

“Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)” (Rom 2:15)

But preachers are told to show the people their sins. Reprove. We have to not let them ignore the message their conscience sends in the late night hours.

So, let us endeavor to make sin exceeding sinful by establishing what these “fleshly lusts” are with clarity and definition. Not that we encourage the behavior or erroneously seek to categorize and prioritize sins. There are no ‘seven deadly sins’ as the Catholic monster would have you believe. No, the wages of all sin is death. But clarity and understanding is our intent, that through knowledge we may avoid the pit.

Lusts – 1939; a longing after that which is forbidden

To lust is to see a thing forbidden to us and in seeking it, consume our thoughts with its absence and work at finding some way to obtain it. While frequently applied to libidinous sexual desires, that is not a fully accurate use of the term,

and I think that's important. One can lust after any worldly thing, including sexual activity, but also money, houses, cars, worldly friends, etc. Whatever is in the world can be lusted after as 1 John 2:16 shows us

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”

A lust of the flesh versus a lust of the eyes is not a distinction without meaning. Yes, when you lust after some man or woman, it is both, but there are times when the lust is not driving you directly toward some act of the flesh; when, say, you lust after some fancy clothes or jewelry, or a car that will make you look cool, or consider inking up your body with tattoos, or some new hair style, or a new hat/vest/belt combo that will bring you into the 'cool kids' group. These are all lusts of the eye, it's about eye candy and looking good so that you fit into the world. The lust of the eyes frequently lead to the lust of the flesh, but they are distinct.

Lust is a slippery slope – it is covetousness and discontentment in its rawest, most depraved form – and sin begets sin, so understanding lust and avoiding it is critical to our work to properly redeem the time we have. We must battle daily, hourly, minutely(?) against that 'old man' that dwells within us to spend the time not on fulfilling our lusts, but on a Godly walk! And fulfilling our lusts is something every son and daughter of Adam seeks to do, don't be fooled by your pride and self-righteousness into thinking you aren't subject to this.

Adultery – 3430; adultery, from 3431, to commit adultery

Adultery in its strictest sense is a sexual connection between a married person and someone who is not their spouse – one side or both sides, it's adultery. Man or woman, both can commit adultery. It is more than that, though, and a legalistic, technical view of it is dismissed by Christ when he said

“But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” (Mat 5:28)

And of course, that applies to women looking on a man to lust after him as well. This shows us that adultery isn't just an act of sexual congress. The colloquial yuck-it-up of “whaaaat, I have eyes and can look can't I” that every comedy show or movie seems to employ in one way or another is nothing less than an admission to the absolute knowledge that it IS NOT okay, it is in fact, a SIN 'just to look'. As a married man or woman, why would you be looking at some person who isn't your spouse in a way that necessitates that cover-up? Your lust is talking, your discontentedness and your covetousness is ruling your time. And when you divorce and remarry, you are living in an adulterous relationship –

every second of every hour of every day it continues, you are an adulterer or adulteress. It really is that simple.

Again, Christ answered this plainly, with no ambiguity for us

“But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.” (Mat 5:32)

This isn't really a foreign topic to this body or to our audience, is it? But is there any sin committed more without shame in this country? Something like 64% of men and 52% of women remarry after they divorce, openly and wantonly living in adultery, and some statistics suggest that 70% or more of those will divorce and remarry again. Shameful, soul-destroying sin must be called what it is!

Fornication – 4202; *harlotry* (including adultery and incest); figuratively idolatry

Fornication is sex outside of marriage. It is inclusive of every type of sex the depraved human heart can conceive of. While Strong's indicates it includes adultery and incest, Thayer's points out that it is distinguished from adultery here at Galatians 5, but also in the parallel passages of Matthew 15:19 and Mark 7:21

“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” (Mat 15:19)

This is a distinction, not a repetition. That distinction has two purposes:

1. To draw attention to the completeness of the point – sex outside of your duly appointed marriage bed is wrong. Plain and simple, no ifs, no ands, no exceptions, no weekend passes – NOTHING. Not married? ABSTAIN! Yes, I'm telling you to keep your clothes on and your mind off the body parts of other people! Abstinence should be the order of the day!
2. The distinction also shows this is a metaphor for idolatry. Why are they connected? We've talked about this lots, so here is the short version. The Church is the Bride of Christ. If you're whoring around with some other god – think an American flag put on display on every high hill and under every green tree and on every so-called church property – if you're worshiping that instead of being faithful to your betrothed husband, you're committing fornication. Why fornication and not adultery? Because the wedding hasn't happened yet – we anticipate the Wedding Supper of the Lamb, do we not? The violence this perpetrates against God is extreme and not a small matter. While this world scoffs at fornication, this should be a most terrifying proposition to you.

Uncleanness – 167; impurity (the quality), physically or morally; Thayer's offers up “in a moral sense, the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living”; this word shares the same derivative root as the word frequently translated 'sin'

You see what's going on with this list, right? This isn't about just a short list of specific acts that are prohibited, thereby enabling you to skirt the specifics and say 'well, my sin isn't in the list, therefore what I'm doing is okay'. How many times do we hear that out of the mouth of some filthy dyke, in some smarmy tone 'it doesn't say woman shalt not lie with woman, blah blah barf'.

With this one simple word you have any and all physical or moral wrongs covered. Theft isn't in this list, so maybe it's okay? Nope. That's clearly an uncleanness, because it is morally wrong. We know in our heart it is wrong to take things that don't belong to us, regardless of what they are, who owns them, etc., and this makes it plain and clear. And that's just one relatively small example. Uncleanness covers a multitude of thoughts, ideas, words, actions, behaviors, etc. It encompasses a state of life, not just isolated deeds. The idea is that you live in a state of constant waste, devoting the resources you've been given to the working of sinful behaviors of all kinds. You roll from one sin to another like you were on a scavenger hunt, seeking every way you can to turn your soul into hell.

Lasciviousness – 766; licentiousness (sometimes including other vices); Thayer's offers up "unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence"

So 'licentiousness' means 'promiscuous and unprincipled in sexual matters' and 'disregarding accepted rules or conventions'. So here we have another word pointing out the shame and danger of sexual immorality, but it means more than just that.

Add to an immoral behavior an outrageousness and complete shamelessness about the behavior and you're getting to the sense of this. Someone who flaunts their sin openly and works to lessen or eliminate the sinful nature of the behavior with a 'psh, everyone's doing it, I'm just the only one brave enough to admit it'. As if that weren't enough, add to it a 'now, why don't you try it' pushiness.

Obnoxiousness would be a word I'd add to the definition. They can't just quietly be a fag, an adulterer, a whore, a thief; no, they have to put it out there like a smell that can't be avoided. They push it with every word, deed and interaction you have with them that they are a notorious sinner. Think fag pride parade. Think about the casual way sex is discussed in school, at work, on TV and movies, as though it was as benign an act as getting a drink of water, and if you don't agree with that mentality you're a prude, old-fashioned, out of touch, and ultimately a hatemonger because you don't participate.

It's not just about sexual sins, though. Lasciviousness shows itself in gluttony, drunkenness, thievery, etc. Any and all sin can be pursued and pushed in a

lascivious manner. And that pushiness is itself a grievous sin. The men described at Jude 1:4 use the grace of God to promote sin, since if God will forgive anything, it doesn't really matter how you behave, right? How many times have we heard that hiss of the serpent? Lasciviousness is a deep, deep pit that demonstrates a complete lack of grace. Its sinfulness is extreme!

Idolatry – 1495; image worship (literally or figuratively)

Generally speaking, when we think of idolatry, we think of little tiki gods or statues of Buddha, maybe the little figurines people pray to in movies like Gladiator. But that is too narrow a definition. We have a phenomenon happening in front of our faces with the US flag. It is idolatry they commit!

“Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I am the LORD your God.” (Lev 26:1)

That word “idols” means “good for nothing, by analogy vain or vanity; specifically an idol”. Now I ask you, does that not describe the flag of this depraved nation? Good for nothing? Literally, and I use that word as it is intended to be used – as in precisely, actually or truly – worth nothing. That is the US flag, worth nothing.

But look at how these people expect you to reverence it. It's a national idol. We can all individually turn anything into an idol, too. An idea, a person, our children, our car, our home, anything and everything in the earth can become an idol if we are going to put our heart and energy and resources toward it instead of God.

And don't give me some nonsense about if you don't literally bow down to it, it can't be an idol. You bow down to it in your heart when you devote your every waking moment to it. You can make an idol with your hands, you can buy it with your money, or you can set it up in your heart. All the ways you can make an idol are prohibited – don't do it.

Witchcraft – 5331; medication (“pharmacy”), that is, (by extension) magic (literal or figurative)

Witchcraft carries with it two senses which are closely related. Let's address that the image of a witch that pops into your head should not solely be the little hunchback old woman with the crazy hair, a wart on her nose and a maniacal laugh. There is an element of that notion, but as Tim recently spoke to, the better image of a witch or sorcerer in this day would be the spectacled, gray-bearded man in the leather chair with a notepad in one hand and a pipe in the other, asking you to tell him about the relationship you have with your mother. When we talk about divining and familiar spirits, and those who “peep and mutter” (Is 8:19) we aren't just talking about people who kill a chicken and swirl

its guts around to “see things in them”. We’re talking about psychology and psychiatry. We’re also talking about that closely related issue of substance abuse and narcotics.

These things are all related because they seek the same thing – a looking to something other than God for relief, satisfaction, and comfort from matters of the mind and heart. Think about what Saul did when he visited the witch at Endor. He would rather have some woman try to talk to the dead than repenting and calling on God. The use of narcotics and psychiatry isn’t any different. You’re using something besides that proscribed remedy to all ills – calling on God – to try and solve your problem. This is a grievous sin that snowballs quickly.

Hatred – 2189; hostility; by implication a reason for opposition

Do we not have reason to hate the people who daily raise up their hands against us, to seek our livelihoods, to take our children, to destitute us, to slay us? In the flesh, of course we do. No “reasonable person” would examine the things that are regularly done to us and begrudge us some ill will toward people.

But that’s why this is a work of the flesh! We must sow to the spirit and war against a mindset of increased weariness and bitterness over the hard treatment we receive, growing into a hatred that eventually stops us from warning these souls we live amongst. We must perform these duties out of genuine love for our fellow man, as I’ve exhorted you to before. If we don’t, hatred consumes us and our warnings are not effectual in the sight of God, leaving us guilty of not only our own sins but those committed by those we should have warned! That’s a terrifying thought that should drive you away from prideful hatred.

Variance – 2054; Of uncertain affinity; a quarrel, that is, (by implication) wrangling

The idea behind wrangling is that of a long, protracted dispute, perhaps having gone on so long that no one remembers the origins of it anymore. Think Hatfields and McCoys. Think the exact opposite of what Sam spoke of in his last sermon regarding peace.

We cannot, either in the world or in our daily walk as a body, have long standing contentions. There is no point in it, it wastes energy, it draws people away from the job we have to do, and it is a grievous sin. This isn’t just little annoyances or personality differences, (though those might start a variance in an unruly spirit); this is a conflict that encroaches upon every interaction you have with a person and shades all that you do with them. They are not uncommon and they are easy to get sucked into. The flesh is susceptible to this especially when we walk in a prideful, self-righteous state that causes us to see ourselves as superior to others. Make no mistake, variances endanger your soul.

Emulations – 2205; properly *heat*, that is, (figuratively) “zeal” (in a favorable sense, *ardor*, in an unfavorable one, *jealousy*, as of a husband [figuratively of God], or an enemy, *malice*)

This is an interesting word, because if you look into it closely, you see it can be used to mean essentially the same thing but in one context it is bad, and in another it is good.

To be zealous can be a very good thing. We are zealous for our God. We are vexed at the disobedience of man toward His simple commands and the absolute hatred that they show Him. We are jealous for Him as He is jealous for His righteousness.

But there is jealousy that is not good, as we see here:

“Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation” (Act 5:17)

The word “indignation” is this same 2205. It is an unrighteous indignation, marked by outbursts and actions against a person with no basis in truth or righteous preaching. There is an element to this in what Shimei did to David (2 Sam 16).

Our vexed spirits and zeal for God can cross a line. Our passions for our cause can become infested with pride and cross over into a false jealousy that instead of being focused on God and His righteousness, looks to the righteousness of our actions and exalts them over God’s words. In the world this is seen all the time, and this jealousy for yourself and not a righteous cause leads to many of these other sins, like hatred and strife. We must be careful with what spirit we do all things!

Wrath – 2372; passion (as if breathing hard); Thayer adds “impulses and outbursts of anger”

This is not righteous indignation; this is not zealous preaching. This is not passionate love of the word and defense of the Gospel. This is malicious, uncharitable, irrational anger explosively expressed; it is generally tied to a violent disposition and violent acts that have no genesis in any good zeal or passion. This is simply being pissed off because you don’t like the way something is. It is generally a reaction to something being done to you, but it has a seething element to it, like the smoldering of a fire. Think a camp fire that is almost out, coals glowing dimly, but lots of fuel left and you suddenly pour gasoline on it. The fire erupts into a blazing inferno in seconds. That’s wrath.

Wrath is a grievous sin because it contains massive discontentment. If you’ve got some anger simmering just under the surface where all it takes is a word to

set it off, something is wrong. Something soul-damning is wrong. Something that needs attention and help. This isn't a one-time, bad day kind of thing (although a lot of that shows the seeds of this in you). This is a way of life kind of thing, where you routinely allow yourself to go on long expressions of anger and malice, perhaps even resulting in physical violence. The world is full of this, which is why they try to drown or quench the fire that drives their wrath with alcohol, drugs and psychiatry. We have no reason to be wrathful, and must avoid this in the extreme. Not with false pretense of happiness and fake displays of joy, certainly, but wrath is a contagious thing that leads to many other sins and should be rooted out of everyone.

Strife – 2052; properly intrigue, that is, (by implication) faction; Thayer says “a courting distinction, a desire to put one's self forward, a partisan and factious spirit which does not disdain low arts; partisanship, factiousness”

Think, among other things, what it takes to run for political office. You'll say anything to anyone to get them to adopt your way of thinking and you're all about that recruiting effort. Now apply that to sin. You so desperately want numbers involved in your sin so you can make it appear 'normal' that you'll say anything to anyone, setting people against each other to accomplish it if you have to.

“A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends.” (Pro 16:28)

This is an interesting word because it doesn't only apply to the words that come out of your mouth, as James tells us

“But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.” (Jas 3:14)

This is a sin of the heart as well of the word and deed. You can say lots of nice things, but if in your heart you are constantly contradicting what you've said and are only playing a game, you play a game with your soul. How often do you encounter a person who you can **see** is saying one thing with their mouths but another in their heart? How many people do you know who spend all their energies talking about what they think of another person's actions, all while ignoring their own and constantly trying to build 'sides' to an argument?

This isn't an attempt to convince yourself to do right. This isn't the battle your 'new man' does with your 'old man' to overcome sin and war against fleshly lust. This is a working away from that battle and toward a fleshly battle of superiority and recruitment to sin. We must constantly battle against sin in our hearts, and strife must not be allowed any quarter to grow and fester there.

Seditions – 1370; disunion, that is, (figuratively) dissension

This is quite closely related to strife, in that when you commit yourself to creating strife, one of the outcomes is disunity and divisions. It is the same word as used here

“For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” (1Co 3:3)

Walking carnally is the opposite of walking spiritually. The carnal man thrives in chaos and disorder, rebelling and bucking against the order that God has ordained. The carnal man seeks to create a false order, one of his own design, with groupings and alignments along carnal things, things of the flesh, not things of the spirit.

There are only two types of people in the world, two divisions if you will – the living and the dead, the elect and the damned, the sheep and the goats. That’s it. If you start trying to create dividing lines along any other group, you’ve left preaching and gone to meddling. Paul continues in 1 Corinthians 3 to lay it out simply for them, speaking to them about the divisions they created of those who were taught by Paul, and those who were taught by Apollos. He also speaks at other places about the divisions they create and the envyings they promote around spiritual gifts through these seditions and divisions. Not good.

We are all one body or we are not. It really is that simple. We can’t create divisions or groups or anything of the sort besides that in scripture – elect and damned. The world is all about the dividing lines. Racial, ethnic, political, geographical, etc., etc. There is so much sin in this behavior it is astounding, and these divisions prevent and promote a multitude of these other lusts of the flesh. We must not be like the world.

Heresies – 139; properly a choice, that is, (specifically) a party or (abstractly) disunion. (“heresy” is the Greek word itself.)

Again, we have another relation to other sins. This is the same word used in 1 Corinthians 11:19 and 2 Peter 2:1. It is not only the introduction of false doctrine, ideas contrary to scripture and/or a perversion of existing proper thought, it is a defense of those ideas with the intent to create strife and thereby a disunity of the body. This is a very, very grievous sin and one that can be very subtle.

It is this sin that Peter warns is committed ‘privily’, that is subtly, and can be done by a close friend, a person who has been thought of as a member of the body in good standing as well as someone from outside. This is one of the most important reasons we must watch for one another. Because in so watching for each other, we watch for ourselves.

A stark example of what this looks like is found in Revelation

“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.” (Rev 2:20)

The watch was perhaps not abandoned, but at least ignored or not tended to from all angles, and so a church ends up eating things sacrificed to idols. That is terrifying. It was likely a gradual thing, slowly morphing doctrine from that which is founded in Scripture to that which is founded on the wisdom of man, and from there it accelerated. These are real dangers and if anyone here in this house thinks we cannot fall to them, I say ‘get thee behind me, Satan’. Your non-chalance is the start of a fall. We are not immune to this or any other sin, and we would all do well to remember this.

Envyings – 5355; ill will (as detraction), that is, jealousy (spite)

Perhaps the best way to understand this is from another scripture:

“For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.” (Mat 27:18)

That is, Pilate knew, simply by examining their countenances that the High Priest and his cohorts didn’t turn Christ over for any reason of loyalty to Caesar or any sense of Him being a danger to the Empire. They delivered Him to Pilate because they saw the way the people responded to His message and it caused them to burn with wrath and jealousy. They saw what little power they had being eroded away under Christ’s teachings and doctrine, and would not have it. They wanted what He had, and believed that they could attain to it by killing Him via Pilate.

These envyings are present in everything. Look at the world around us. Everyone seeks to have the things of another, to the point where they will riot and steal it *en masse* when the opportunity arises. They rail against the 1%, not because they have a problem with wealth, but because they have a problem with their being in the 99%. This danger is present for us. Do you envy someone’s ability to speak, or recall Scripture or some spiritual gift? Do you harbor some, even a faint, bit of animosity or spite toward a person because they have a greater understanding of some element of the Word than you, or have been given a family or a job or a home that you do not have? Does this seem somehow unfair to you? Silence those thoughts and remember that God is the author of all things, and therefore there is no inequity in it.

There are many ways that envy can overtake us, and like many of these lusts, it can be subtle and slowly done. It is a thing that might consume your heart but not your words until it bubbles over the top and presents itself as wrath. Contentedness with our lots is a must to avoid envy.

Murders – 5408; to slay

You might have a tendency to look at this one and say to yourself ‘well, duh, this one is pretty obvious, I ain’t comittin’ no murders’. If that’s in your mind, think about this response – why aren’t all of these just as obvious to you as murder? Inquire in your own mind and heart if all the lusts of the flesh are as repugnant to you as the taking of a life? Why don’t you endeavor to avoid all these as diligently as murder?

This is all taking of life – by your own hand, the hiring of another, the desiring of it in your heart, the considering of it as a conflict resolution mechanism, of the born, of the unborn, etc. This is both the physical act of murder and desiring it, just like adultery, and is often the result of many of the other lusts of the flesh.

Drunkenness – 3178; an intoxicant, that is, (by implication) intoxication

In this societal makeup we live in, drunkenness and intoxication (including the taking of drugs) is seen as a daily part of life. For many, many people, I mean that literally. They leave work and go home to consume considerable amounts of alcohol so that they ‘get a buzz’ or full on become so intoxicated they cannot walk straight.

Now, what a man does in his own home, you might say, is his business, right? What’s the big deal if a guy (or gal) wants to sit on their sofa and binge watch some TV while putting back some cold ones. I mean, right?

Wrong!

Drunkenness is so grievous for a few reasons. First, it speaks again to that dissatisfaction with your life. You hate the life God has given you so much that you must make your life appear as a fuzzy, blurry reality, hidden from you by the effects of drugs or drink. Second, it is a path to committing every single one of the lusts of the flesh and every other sin known to man because it enables you to ignore the truths you know about those sins; it removes your inhibitions to commit them. Third, it keeps you from performing your proper duties to God and your fellow man. Fourth, everyone knows it does these things and so impairing yourself in such a manner makes this an even more grievous sin.

This isn’t about the glass of wine at dinner or the sip of wine taken in the Lord’s Supper. This is about consuming such quantities of alcohol that it makes you almost a different person. Abstain.

Revellings – 2970; a carousal (as if a letting loose); Thayer provides “a nocturnal and riotous procession of half-drunken and frolicsome fellows who after supper parade through the streets with torches and music in honor of Bacchus or some other deity, and sing and play before the houses of their male and female friends; hence used

generally, of feasts and drinking-parties that are protracted till late at night and indulge in revelry”

Think a frat party or Mardi Gras. Think no restraint. I can't tell you the number of times I've been told in some forced social setting around people I work with that I should 'let loose'. Yes, let loose that restraint that God has told us to have. It is the subtle hiss of Satan to ignore this exhortation of Paul

“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” (1Co 9:27)

This 'letting loose' is a letting loose of your depravity, and of course drunkenness is a key way to fall into that pit, which is yet another connection of these fleshly lusts.

Keeping under our bodies is not about a stoic self-righteousness. It is about not willingly partaking in these things which damn the soul out of fear for our souls, knowing we are as susceptible to them as any other man.

This litany of sins is closed with the phrase “and such like”. This enumerates for us that these are demonstrative, not a list of “deadly sins”. The lusts of the flesh are legion, and we must war against them all. All sins are deadly and must be proactively warred against.

If we refuse to step to that war, what is the expected outcome? Our only expectation is that “those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God”. We don't have some special dispensation against the committing of these sins. They are part of the depraved condition of all mankind. We must war against them, we must warn against them, and we must ask our God to lead us not into the temptations of them. They are of the flesh, not of the spirit, and if we can sow to the spirit, we can certainly overcome their attraction. There is not one in that list that we are not susceptible to, either. Don't think so for a second. That is one of the ways we get drawn into them. They are all terrifying when looked at through the lens of Scripture, but inviting when looked at through the lens of the world, and how often do we find ourselves looking through that lens?

Understanding the lusts of the flesh is not an academic exercise, and I hope my treatment of these matters has not presented itself as such. Sometimes we have to go back and look at what words mean, and try to break a thing down into a simple form, which is what I have attempted to do here. I hope it was helpful.

“Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations” (Eze 16:2)