

Is Masturbation a Sin?

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I'm dealing with these matters because there are some of God's true children that seriously are struggling with the areas that I'm going to deal with today. And so, I do want to, I want to visit these things. The first one is a revisit. 2 weeks ago, we had this question come up, and I want to, I need to deal with this again. And, I just want to emphasize once again, what I'm about to talk to is taboo for many, but we have many people looking for Biblical answers in this very area. I'm not trying to be unnecessarily graphic. But the question that I fielded 2 weeks ago that I want to return to is this one.

Question:

A man by the name of Dan asked this question: Is masturbating a sin? I sought to answer that, and we got so much response. And we got folks who felt that it wasn't clear, that maybe I was being dogmatic about things that maybe weren't really so much biblical. There have been a number of responses that just led me to believe that we probably needed to revisit this one.

Discussion:

You know, based on the feedback that I saw, based on some of the things that I have heard, I am quite convinced that probably every man in this room has struggled with masturbation. I am quite convinced that almost as many girls, at one time or another.

What I want to do is... you know the question is, is it sin? That's the first question. And what I don't want to... look, I realize this... this is a realistic issue that we need to deal with; the church needs to deal with, Christians need to deal with; myself as a pastor, I need to address. And I don't want to do it in a way where I just beat everybody over the head, I just dismiss you as, well, if you've got a problem with this, you're not a Christian. That's not the case. We've got true Christians that have struggles in this very area.

Now the fact is, if you're over your head in bondage to it, there may be a very likelihood that a person in that situation, may still be under the power of sin, and may not be converted. And that's a very realistic possibility that each one of us needs to evaluate anytime any kind of sin gets a hold on us where we suffer defeat. Now you see right there I'm making an assumption that it's a sin.

Well let me just show you some things about this that I want you folks to take away with you. What I want to try to do first here is just inform you a little bit. The first thing, if you have your Bibles there, I'd like you all to turn to Matthew 5, and verse 28.

You see, folks, one of my pastoral concerns is this: We have a whole movement. Really this has been a movement on the move for 2000 years. Because you can go back all the way to the time of the Scriptures, and you've got the apostles themselves saying, Do not be deceived. Basically, if you are in bondage to sin, if you are in bondage to unrighteousness, they're saying don't be deceived, you're not a true believer. And we have false prophets rising up on every hand today that would basically teach us you can be a true Christian, and you can run and be a

slave to all sorts of sin. And that's just not biblical and it's just not true. And that's a pastoral concern, because I don't want people to be deceived.

And you see one of the things is, we've got folks, and probably some of you sitting in this room: you profess to be Christians, and yet you are in such bondage to pride, to lust, to your idols, to money, to some appetite, to something in life, that, it's a big waving red flag that things are not well with your soul. But because of false teaching, because of ignorance on your part, you've been led to believe that, once saved, always saved, and basically you said some prayer, you basically went up to some altar somewhere, you raised your hand at some point. Whatever it is. There's a whole lot of this thinking today.

And yet, people do those things, and they're quite convinced that they're on their way to Heaven. And then, the fact is, they are slaves of sin, and true Christians are not slaves to sin. They're slaves of righteousness the Bible tells us. They're slaves of God. And here's this big red flag waving, and yet you don't have the eyes to even see it. And what I don't want, is I don't want any of you waking up on judgment day to find out I was dead wrong. The indicator was there the whole time and I missed it.

Well the reason I had you turn to Matthew 5:28 is this: Jesus Christ is teaching, I say to you, that everyone who looks at a woman... And obviously this could be a woman looking at a man. Everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Now let me tell... I want to make several observations about that text. Fornicators and adulterers do not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. The Bible teaches that. You find that over in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 verse 9. Fornicators and adulterers do not--you can find it in a number of other areas as well in the Scriptures-- but they don't inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. That is an indication- to be under the power of that, that is and indication that a person is lost. And if they're a slave to that type of thing...

Now look, don't think I'm making this up here, because, just go on and read the next verse. Jesus Christ is not saying that this is a minor issue, it's a small matter, and something that you don't have to give a whole lot of concern about. If your right eye causes you to sin...

Now notice, notice the context. Jesus isn't just coming out of the blue with this teaching, He's dealing with what He just talked about. He just talked about not specifically the sinful act of adultery, but adultery in the mind.

And on that note, He says this: If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.

Now I'm going to tell you something here. Jesus Christ is teaching us that there needs to be repentance, there needs to be evidence of true regeneration in the life of somebody if they are going to escape hell. That's a reality.

He's not saying this is a matter of whether you're going to have greater or lesser rewards, He's saying this is a matter of life and death. If you don't tear out these eyes, and if you don't lose these members, you're going to be thrown into hell, that's what He's saying.

You say, Wait! Do I get to Heaven by my works, by being pure? Let me tell you this, a person gets to Heaven by nothing less than faith in Jesus Christ, but where there is genuine faith in Jesus Christ, there is also genuine transformation of the heart. God said, A new heart

also will I give them He said, I'm going to write my law on them, I'm going to put my Spirit within them. That Holy Spirit puts to death sin in those in whom He dwells. If that's not the case, then you're not a true Christian. That's like Romans 8, what is it, verse 9? If you don't have the Spirit of Christ, you are none of His. You don't belong to Him. This is a matter of life and death.

Now let's come back to the masturbation thing. Folks, I've heard this week and last week about people insisting that they can masturbate with nothing happening in the mind. Now folks, I don't think those people are being honest with themselves. I have a hard time imagining orgasm of the body without pictures in the mind. And if there are pictures in the mind...

And I heard somebody just recently say, well, yeah they get them, but they try to fight them off. Well the fact is, they are involved in something that's bringing them in. They're involved in something that's bringing them in that would even force them to have to fight it off. They're opening the door to invite these things to come in.

Now let me just ask you guys something because I know this is especially a problem there. You start taking images of a lady, some young lady in your mind, what are you going to do? Walk out the door here and go evangelizing? How are you going to respect people of the opposite sex when you use them that way?

And you're... that's what it is, even if it's just an image of them that you have in your mind. You're going to use people of the opposite sex that way?

I'm... folks, this idea that people can be involved in this kind of activity and they're not sinning in thought... I'm not going to say, I'm not going to be here and say, I've been in all your minds, and I know every circumstance, and I'm going to say it's impossible. I'm not going to say that, I can't dogmatically say that, but I know, and you know that to be involved in that type of thing without images in your mind...

And Jesus Christ says this is a matter of life and death. And people can try to justify, but I'm telling you, this is a matter of life and death. If you're going to try to justify this, I would tread very, very carefully. Because Christ is talking about lustful intent in the mind, and being thrown into hell. Don't play with this thing.

And just on that note, I've heard some guys try to say this is how they try to cope with sexual temptation. Wait a second, 1 Corinthians 6:18 says flee from sexual immorality. Flee from it. And even the guys that say they try to use masturbation to kind of take the edge off so that they won't fall into sexual temptation... Look, if the same guys admit that they're also being attacked by images in their mind that they have to fight off, I would just ask the question, is masturbation running from sexual immorality, or is it running into it? Are you fighting against it, or are you inviting it? That's just something to ask.

Now, turn in your Bibles to Hebrews 13:4. Because I also want you to see this passage. Hebrews 13:4. Again, this is another text I think we really, really need to take seriously. Hebrews 13:4. "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled. For God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous." You know what's so interesting about this passage? You have one thing that God honors, which is what? What is honorable? The marriage bed.

And the writer of Hebrews runs right from what is honorable, to what is dishonorable. And it's as though there's no middle ground here. The marriage bed is honorable. And then right

after that isn't it amazing that he jumps right into God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous?

Now I'm not going to be dogmatic here, but it's as though the writer is implying... what? Everything aside from the marriage bed as far as sexual outlet goes, falls into the category of sexual immorality and adultery. And if you're going to say you've found some secret little middle ground that isn't covered there, again, I tell you, you'd better tread carefully. Because just like in the other one we had hell threatened, we have God's judgment threatened. This is not a small matter folks. Don't think you can toy with this and be wrong, without it costing you much.

Let's go further. I want you folks to turn to 1 Corinthians 6:12. And again, I think it's so interesting here, here's Paul's words to the Corinthians, it's so interesting, his context. I mean, it's almost as though it's written just for us to give consideration to, just these kind of things.

1 Corinthians 6:12. All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. Now watch this. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be enslaved by anything. Food is meant for the stomach, and the stomach for food, and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord. And the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord, and will raise us up by His power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Or do you not know, that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For as it is written, the two will become one flesh. But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one Spirit with Him. Flee from sexual immorality.

Isn't it interesting, where Paul's saying I won't be enslaved to anything it's right in this context of fleeing sexual immorality. Let me tell you this: When Paul tells us how he lives, you are under commandment of God to imitate him as he imitates Christ. Have you ever heard him say that? Paul calls us to imitate his example repeatedly.

Now listen, being brought under the power of anything, is basically what? I mean, we might look at it as idolatry. But here's the thing that Paul says: he wouldn't be brought under the power of anything. As Christians, we have the responsibility not to be brought under the power of anything. Look, where you've got a guy saying, Well, I need to do this. You know what he's basically saying? What is he confessing to? What's he admitting? He's a slave, he's brought under the power of it. Paul says, I will not be enslaved by anything.

You know what? Once in a while my wife cuts coffee out, you know why? To show she's not enslaved to it. Once in a while I'll say you know what? I'm going on a sweets fast, a soda fast for the next 3 months or whatever, I'm not touching it. Why? The apostle Paul says this: I discipline my body, I keep it under control, lest after preaching to others...

Now listen to this again. I discipline my body, and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others, I myself should be disqualified. or rejected, or cast away. You see what Paul's saying again? This is a life and death matter. Paul says, I keep myself disciplined, lest when this is all done, and I've preached the truth to others, I end up a castaway.

Young men, are you keeping your body disciplined? Are you keeping yourself un-enslaved? Do you have control of your body? The apostle Paul gives... the apostle Paul tells us to imitate him. Are you imitating him here? Can you tell your body no to any physical appetite, anytime, and keep it under control? That's what Paul did, and that's what he calls us to do. To imitate him. To follow him as he follows Christ.

Lets go here: Jesus Christ said "Follow me." If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. Now listen to this, Jesus Christ says in order to follow Him, what do you have to do? You have to deny yourself... You have to deny yourself...

Folks, and I say this to anyone that's watching, anybody that's seated here. Jesus Christ is ultimately the example that we are to follow. We follow Paul in as much as he followed Christ, but Christ is the example. Christ told us, bid us, follow Him.

You're walking on really treacherous ground if you believe that Christ was involved in any type of sexual activity like that. He calls us to follow Him. We have to really ask ourselves: would we try to contend For the fact that masturbation is in any shape or form following Him? My estimation folks, that's a stretch.

We find in the Scriptures this, go on to another thing: Titus 3:3: We ourselves were once foolish... Now listen, this is describing... What Paul is doing is he is describing what we once were. He says we ourselves were once foolish. Titus 3:3. We ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures. Now look, the only reason I bring this up is because I would ask this question. One of the things that we see happen when people are converted, is what Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 5: old things pass away, all things become new.

And I would just ask you folks, is masturbation, is that not something that characterizes the old life? The lost life? The way of the world? We ourselves were once slaves to various passions and pleasures. I mean, let me just ask the question, is masturbation characteristic of our past sinful life? Or is it characteristic of a pure life God has called us to?

Let me throw another thing out at you, 1 Corinthians 10:13. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

And what we need to ask ourselves is this: Is masturbation a way of escape that God has provided for us from sexual temptation? Or is it a way that man chooses? I think we need to ask that.

What about the guy that comes and says, I can't be involved in anything like that, except I have images in my mind. He's thinking about girls all the time. What that text tells me, is there's a way out for him.

Again, I think you're walking on dangerous ground if you say, Well yeah, the way out for him is God will help him clear his mind. I don't believe that's what that text means. God will give a way out.

Now listen to this; Romans 8:13: If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. Let me tell you something, I think some of this, some of this which is being argued for is coming from lost people, but also I think it's coming from some Christians who are suffering from, well really they're guilty of a large dose of unbelief. They're just not confident about the power of the Spirit.

Listen, you know what I know? I know there are men in this room, and women in this room that have been delivered from masturbation and pornography altogether. The same Spirit that delivered them can deliver you. It's a matter of faith, folks. We have to walk by faith. You really have to have an expectation that with God all things are possible.

You know what? Most of the folks that continue on in this and try to justify it, they really don't believe that the sexual impulses, the bodily desires can be so subdued, that they can have victory. That's really where they're coming from. They say no, I've got to take the edge off, I've got to be involved in this, this is an outlet.

What are you saying? You're saying the Spirit of God is too weak to overcome that? Even if it's the greatest, strongest, most enslaving desire of the body. What are we going to say? The Spirit of God isn't stronger? That's crazy folks. By the Spirit, deeds of the body can indeed be put to death.

Then I would bring this one up: Just 2 texts. Hebrews 13:7: Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. And then Philippians 3:17: Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

You see what both of those texts are? They're calls to follow godly leaders. The one there in Hebrews, Consider the outcome of the way of life of your leaders, imitate their faith. Philippians 3:17: brothers, join in imitating me... that's Paul speaking and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. So imitate me, and imitate any others that are like me is basically what he's saying.

What I would ask you guys is this: Come across the men and women whose faith you admire the most, and ask them if they masturbate. I guarantee you'll find they don't. I guarantee you'll find men and women who have had victory. Imitate them. Follow them.

I ask you this question: Do you think the most godly men and women that you come across, that you read about in history, were slaves to this? Do you think that the Robert Murray McChesney, the Brainerds, these men who stayed single, the Henry Martyns, these guys that stayed single and served the Lord, that are written about in the history books, and in the biographies, you think these guys were slaves to this? You think they were knocking the edge off so they could get victory in these areas? I'm telling you no.

If you doubt it, start asking people that you respect, people that you see walk with Christ, people that you see. You know what I'll guarantee you? Look at the ones who are justifying this, and you will find that they are people with not much spiritual depth. I'll guarantee you that's the case.

Imitate those men. And if you don't believe me, I know it might be embarrassing, but you know what? Mature Christians will not be afraid to answer that question. They'll pull you aside, and they'll tell you. Ask them. Mark my words, you're going to find they have victory over sexual passions. They're not slaves to them.

The last thing I would say here is this: James 4:6. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. You say what is that about, how does that enter in here? Oh folks, please, listen to me. You know what I've found in my Christian life? A lot of times, even God's true children; they stall out in victory over sin in a certain area of their life, because of another sin. In other words, they have some other... Who is it that puts to death the deeds of the body? You do, but by whose power? The Spirit's. Romans 8:13.

Now here's the thing, if you grieve that Spirit, there's where the grace and the power come from. But what can happen is you can grieve the Spirit by another sin in your life that

gives you an inability to conquer sexual temptation. And I'll tell you one of the chief ones is pride.

Let me tell you something. For some of you, this is going to hit right close to home. Some of you have problems in this area because you've got some resentment and bitterness towards God. And it can fall out just like this: Well I think I ought to have a husband or I think I ought to have a wife and God hasn't given me one, and you know what, I don't really like that. And you can begin to find fault with God, and begin to have a pity party, that leads you into this kind of sin. And you can begin to feel resentment towards God, and what it is is it's pride, you're not willing to be humble before the Lord.

And if you would repent of that pride, you would repent of that bitterness, you would come to humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and the situation He's put you in... You may not like your singleness, but it's where God has you right now, and if you would humble yourself and submit yourself there, you would find God give you grace. But because of the pride in your life...

Listen to the text again. God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. And one of the reasons you may not have the grace to overcome is because you haven't humbled yourself. And you throw pity parties, and you have anger. It may be an underlying thing, but you have some resentment and anger towards the Lord that He hasn't given you a girlfriend, He hasn't given you a wife, you're not courting anybody right now, you don't have a husband, it's not working out the way you want, you don't like your situation; and what your base problem is in all this, it's toward the Lord, it's a pride matter.

You want your own way, and you don't like His way for your life, and you're not content with where you're at right now. Folks, consider that one. That may have more to do with this than what you may know. Well, there's that.