
Blessed Are All the Pure in Heart

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Of the Seventy

May God bless our genuine efforts to be pure of heart and mind, that “virtue [may] garnish [our] thoughts unceasingly.”



Walking down a beach in the Caribbean one sunny morning some years ago, my wife and I saw several small fishing boats that had been pulled up onto the sand. When we stopped to look at the boats, I learned something about fishing that I have never forgotten. Instead of using nets, lines, or hooks, the local fishermen used simple traps made of wire mesh. Each trap was shaped like a box. The fishermen cut vertical openings about eight inches long on each side of the trap and then bent the cut wires inward, creating narrow slots through which fish could enter.

You can probably guess how a trap worked. The fishermen took a baited

trap out to sea and lowered it to the bottom. When a dinner-sized fish came near the trap and sensed the bait, it would find an opening on the side of the trap and swim in, just squeezing between the cut wires. Then, when a trapped fish tried to swim out, it would discover that it was one thing to squeeze past the cut wires to get into the trap, but it was an entirely different thing to swim against those sharp ends to get out—it was caught. When the fishermen returned, they hauled the trap out of the water, and the trapped fish soon became a fresh seafood dinner.

There’s an account in the Old Testament about someone who fell prey to a similar trap. That man was mighty King David, and what happened is one of the saddest stories in the scriptures.

“And it came to pass . . . at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they [fought against Ammon]. But David tarried still at Jerusalem.

“And it came to pass in an evening-tide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king’s house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon” (2 Samuel 11:1–2).



David learned the woman's name was Bathsheba. Her husband, Uriah, a soldier, was away fighting the Ammonites with the rest of the army, where David, their king, should have been. David had Bathsheba brought to the palace. They committed adultery, she became pregnant, and David began to fear that their adultery would be discovered. Hoping to cover his sin, David ordered that Uriah be sent back to Jerusalem. Uriah returned, but refused on principle to go to his home to visit Bathsheba. David then arranged for Uriah to be slain in battle (see 2 Samuel 11:3–17). This series of dreadful decisions brought death to Uriah and misery to David, Bathsheba, and eventually the entire kingdom. With rich understatement, the Bible says, "The thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (2 Samuel 11:27).

Do you see how David got caught in this trap? He was on a rooftop courtyard of his palace, and looking below in a neighboring yard, he saw something he never should have seen. That was the adversary's bait. Modesty, chastity, and good judgment

required that David turn away immediately and not watch, but he didn't do either thing. Instead, he allowed his mind to turn to forbidden fantasies, those thoughts led to actions, and things quickly spiraled downward from bad to worse to fatal. David was trapped, and for him the consequences were eternal.

There's a spiritual snare today called pornography, and many, allured by its provocative messages, enter this deadly trap. Like any trap, it is easy to enter but difficult to escape. Some rationalize that they can casually view pornography without suffering its adverse effects. They say initially, "This isn't so bad," or, "Who cares? It won't make any difference," or, "I'm just curious." But they are mistaken. The Lord has warned, "And he that looketh upon a woman to lust after her shall deny the faith, and shall not have the Spirit; and if he repents not he shall be cast out" (D&C 42:23). That's exactly what happened to David: he looked at Bathsheba, lusted after her, and lost the Spirit. How different the rest of David's life might

have been if he had just looked away.

Along with losing the Spirit, pornography users also lose perspective and proportion. Like King David, they try to conceal their sin, forgetting that nothing is hidden from the Lord (see 2 Nephi 27:27). Real consequences start to accumulate as self-respect ebbs away, sweet relationships sour, marriages wither, and innocent victims begin to pile up. Finding that what they have been viewing no longer satisfies, they experiment with more extreme images. They slowly grow addicted even if they don't know it or they deny it, and like David's, their behavior deteriorates as their moral standards disintegrate.

As popular culture across the world degenerates, sleaze increasingly saturates the media, entertainment, advertising, and the Internet. But popularity according to the world's prevailing norms is a very perilous scale to use to measure what's right or even what's not dangerous. A movie or television show may be well known and well liked by millions of viewers and nevertheless portray images and conduct that are pornographic. If something in a movie "isn't too bad," that automatically means that it isn't too good either. Thus, the fact that others watch movies or open Web sites that aren't appropriate is no excuse for us. Priesthood holders' lives should emulate the standards of the Savior and His Church, not the standards of the world.

The Savior taught, "And blessed are all the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (3 Nephi 12:8). The promises of the gospel are uplifting and ennobling, even exalting. We receive those promises by covenants which are conditioned on our living lives of purity and morality. When we live right and seek to purify our hearts, we draw closer to God and the Spirit. The condition of our heart determines how much evidence of divinity we see in the world now and qualifies

us for the eventual realization of the promise that the pure “shall see God.” Ours is a quest for purity. Thus, the Apostle John wrote:

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:2–3).

If you are already caught in the pornography trap, now is the time to free yourself with the help of the Savior. There is a way out, but you will need His help to escape. Your complete recovery will depend upon your complete repentance. Go to your bishop immediately. Seek his inspired guidance. He will help you put in place a plan of repentance that will restore your self-esteem and bring the Spirit back into your life. The healing power of the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ reaches all afflictions, even this one. If you will turn to the Savior with all of your heart and follow the counsel of your bishop, you will find the healing you need. The Savior will help you find the strength to resist temptation and the power to overcome addiction. As Moroni taught:

“Come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing. . . .

“Yea, come unto Christ, and be perfected in him, and deny yourselves of all ungodliness; and if ye shall deny yourselves of all ungodliness, and love God with all your might, mind and strength, then is his grace sufficient for you, that by his grace ye may be perfect in Christ” (Moroni 10:30, 32).

May God bless our genuine efforts to be pure of heart and mind, that “virtue [may] garnish [our] thoughts unceasingly” (D&C 121:45). I testify of the redeeming love of the Savior and of the purifying power of His Atonement in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■