

Seven Deadly Sins: Lust

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[0 : 0 0] So, this week we are continuing a series that we started at the beginning of the season of Lent, looking at the seven deadly sins. Three guesses as to which sin we're focusing on this evening.

The readings make it pretty obvious we're going to be talking about the sin of lust. Now, when people talk about sin, that's already a kind of archaic idea. But certain things, things like murder or exploitation, those are things that society takes very seriously. We don't often, hopefully, joke about those kinds of sins. But when it comes to lust, people kind of respond with a bit of a wink and a nod. There's been a massive shift in our society over the last 50 years in attitudes toward sex and sexual desire and lust. And many people see these as all being synonymous terms. Sex in our society has come to be almost seen as a form of recreation.

And so, people look at Christians and they say, what's their problem? Why do Christians continue to be so hung up on sex? Why do they have to be so prudish and legalistic? It's interesting, though, when we look at people like Alain de Botton, who is an atheist, and he's a philosopher, and he's in the UK, and listen to what he says about sex. Most people believe the idea that we belong to a liberated age and ought by now to be finding sex as straightforward and untroubling matter, a little like tennis, something that everyone should have as often as possible to relieve the stresses of modern life. But the narrative of enlightenment and progress skirts an unbudging fact. Sex is not something we can ever expect to feel easily liberated from. It is a fundamentally disruptive and overwhelming force, at odds with the majority of our ambitions, and all but incapable of being discreetly integrated within civilized society. He goes on to say, tame it though we might try. It tends to wreak havoc across our lives. It leads us to destroy our relationships, threatens our productivity, and compels us to stay up too late in nightclubs, talking to people we don't even like.

Only religions see sex as something potentially dangerous and needing to be guarded against. Religious people are often mocked for being prudish, but they wouldn't judge sex to be quite so bad if they didn't also understand that it could be rather wonderful. This is no Puritan talking. This is an atheist philosopher who's making a very honest and counter-cultural observation that as much as we try to tame sex and treat it like a normal part of our recreational life, it refuses to play by the rules. And any cursory glance at the headlines on any given Tuesday show us that unrestrained lust, as he says, can wreak havoc.

And so tonight we're going to look a little more closely at lust. And we're going to do that by looking at a case study of a man in the Bible in the Old Testament named David, King David, and a sordid affair that plays out with a woman named Bathsheba, a very famous story. And as we look at this together, we're going to see three things. We're going to see the nature of lust. What is it? And then we're going to see the dynamics of lust. How it actually works and why it's so dangerous, pernicious. And then finally we'll see the answer to lust. How do we respond? How do we gain freedom over this in our lives? Let's pray.

[3 : 52] Father, a topic like this engenders many different reactions. Some of us scoff, some of us roll our eyes. But for others of us, this brings to the surface deep shame, deep hurt, maybe even a sense of hopelessness or futility. But Lord, we know that yours is not a kingdom of shame, that yours is a kingdom of freedom, people who have been liberated through the power of your gospel. And so we pray against shame tonight, and we also pray against indifference. And instead we pray that by your power alone, we would leave this place experiencing the freedom that can only be found in you.

And we pray this in your Son's holy name. Amen. So the nature of lust. The first thing we need to do is to differentiate between lust and sexual desire. Because as I said a moment ago, a lot of people treat them as being interchangeable, but they're not. Despite what most people think, Christians actually simultaneously have a higher and more realistic view of sexual desire than virtually any other philosophy, religion, or worldview.

Some people in society across history have had a very low view of sex. And that comes from the idea that the spiritual aspects of life are superior to the physical. And so sex is seen as being bad and negative and evil and shameful and base. And a lot of people think that that's what Christians believe. But in fact, that's not rooted in Christianity. That way of thinking is rooted in Greek philosophy. It's a platonic way of thinking. And then there are other schools of thought, and this ranges, you know, everybody from Freud to the American public school system, who view sex as simply a biological drive alongside hunger and thirst. And it's okay to do it as long as you're safe and use protection.

That's the kind of naturalist view. And then there's a third kind of response to sexual desire, and that's the romanticized view of sexual desire that treats sex and love and desire as being among the highest, if not the highest good. Sexual desire is a form of self-expression. It is one of the greatest virtues, the greatest ideals in society. And so these three ways of thinking about sex, you can find them in various combinations all throughout our society. And the Christian vision of sexuality that is rooted in Scripture gives us a vision that is in some ways similar and yet very distinct from any of these other ways of thinking about it. Because on the one hand, unlike people who say sex is bad and evil and negative and base, the Scripture actually shows us that sex is something that we were created to enjoy from the very beginning of the world, that God created us with the capacity and the desire for sexual union. And that He created us not simply to do this for procreation or out of necessity, but to enjoy it. Some of you who go to, many of you know that we just finished a series a few weeks ago in the Song of Songs, which is an entire poem devoted to sexual intimacy that exists within a marriage between a man and a woman. And this vision of sexuality is breathtaking. It's uncomfortable at times. Frankly, the translators, by and large, chicken out when it comes to translating this into

English, because there are very clear, explicit references to male and female physical arousal that kind of get glossed over, you know, and it's uncomfortable to read. And these are not people who are doing it out of necessity. These are people who are delighting in one another.

[7 : 59] And so the Gospel and the Scripture show us this incredible vision, this incredibly high view of sexuality, where it's actually seen as being a spiritual act, a sacrament that reflects the love between Christ and His church. So it's much more than a biological drive. It's much more than just a, you know, a thing that we do out of necessity. And yet, on the other hand, unlike the romantics, Christians don't enthrone sexual desire. As high a view as we hold of sex and sexual desire, we don't enthrone it. In other words, we understand that there is something inherently broken in human sexuality, that everybody is sexually broken, and that we cannot trust our desires to lead us to truth.

That they often lead us astray. And this brings us into the topic of lust, which is interwoven throughout all human sexual desire. And we see a little more about this in the story of David and Bathsheba. Just to catch you up on David's life, David is a complete, total rock star in the Old Testament. He is, by this point, the greatest king Israel has ever known. He's, in their mind, the promised king. He's a man after God's own heart. He's God's chosen king, chosen vassal.

And at this point in 2 Samuel, the first nine chapters, David has built Israel into this great nation. Their enemies are bowing before them. And when we get to chapters 10 and 11, David is in the midst of a war against the Ammonites. And the fighting had ceased over the winter, but in early spring, David sends his armies out once again to lay siege to Rabbah, which is the capital of the Ammonites. But the scripture tells us all of the soldiers go, but David remains behind. Now we'll come back to that. It's very important. So one morning, David goes out for a stroll on the roof, which is the highest point in the city. You can look down on anybody else's house from that point.

And he looks and he sees this beautiful woman who's bathing on her roof. Turns out she is the wife of his best friend and one of his most trusted soldiers, a man named Uriah. But at this time, Uriah is off fighting David's war. And so David ends up sleeping with her. And it's very unclear whether she's able to give consent. And then afterwards, she becomes pregnant. And she tells David that she's become pregnant. And he realizes he has to cover things up. Because otherwise, people might know. As if every servant in the castle doesn't know, right? And so he has to cover this up.

And so he tries to trick Uriah. He calls him in from the battlefield. And he gets him drunk. And he says, why don't you go spend a night with your wife? And then you can go back out and join the fight the next day. But Uriah has way too much integrity for that. He says, I can't do that while all of my comrades are sleeping in the dirt. And so he refuses. And so David is a last resort, pens a message, gives it to Uriah, tells him to take it to his commanding officer. And what does the message say? Send Uriah into the most dangerous part of the battlefield. Send him on a suicide mission. Make sure he doesn't come home. So his commanding officer, Joab, obeys. And David and a number of other soldiers are slaughtered needlessly. And then David takes Bathsheba into his home and makes her his wife so that nobody will know. And this text practically begs the question, how could this happen? David was the best of the best. He was a man after God's own heart,

[11 : 36] God's chosen king. And yet in this story, he's no different than any of the men who have made the headlines, people like Harvey Weinstein. And in fact, arguably, he's worse. Israel's great hero. So how do we make sense of this?

Well, this is what lust looks like. And there are two things that make lust distinct from sexual desire. The first is this. And we see this very clearly. Lust is not just a desire. It is an over-desire.

It's an excessive desire. It's a kind of desire that overwhelms your rational faculties and your better judgment. In Matthew 5, that passage we just read a moment ago, Jesus says in verse 27, you have heard that it was said you shall not commit adultery. But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery. Now that word lustful intent, the Greek word there is *epithumia*. *Epi* means over. *Thumia* comes from *thumos*, which means desire. So *epithumia* is an over-desire. And that's exactly what we see in David.

At that moment, he's not thinking about anything else because he's overwhelmed with desire. His better judgment has been compromised. And then the second thing that makes lust different from sexual desire is that while sexual desire is focused on another person, lust is primarily oriented toward one's own sexual gratification, your own desire. It's a consumeristic way of seeing another person as an object or a means to get your own needs met, to get the pleasure that you are craving.

And so David, again, is clearly not focused on the welfare of Bathsheba or of Uriah or of the other soldiers or of his family who pay a massive price for this down the road, nor is he concerned about his relationship with God. The only thing he cares about in this moment is getting his own needs met.

[13 : 48] And this is lust, a textbook example of lust in action. So here's the difference that we need to be clear on. Sexual desire is a good and a natural and an amazing and a beautiful part of what it means to be a human being created in the image of God. Lust, by contrast, is an excessive desire for one's own sexual gratification. So I just want to give you a few examples of how this plays out in our life.

The first and most obvious example is pornography, right? Pornography, by the way, is not just a men's issue. More and more women every year are accessing, using, and becoming addicted to pornography. So it affects everybody, and it's ubiquitous. And, you know, porn sites you may have seen now receive more regular traffic than Netflix, Amazon, and Twitter combined every month. It's an enormous amount of traffic. So porn is the ultimate example of lust because it's driven exclusively by excessive desire, and it is purely about self-gratification. It doesn't even involve another real person, right? So this is the classic example. But there are other examples.

Sex outside of the covenant of marriage invariably will ultimately become a form of lust. And I know that that may be controversial for some of you, but I want you to understand that sex in a marriage covenant is a means of or a way of giving yourself to someone. And sex in a marital covenant is connected to a larger life of self-donation, of service, of sharing, of building a reality and an existence together. When it comes to sexual intimacy that is outside of a covenant, no matter how much you may feel love for one another or no matter how much you may be committed to one another, inevitably you're saying, I want the physical pleasure, I want the gratification, or I want the feelings of worth that being with you gives me. And yet I'm not fully willing to give myself fully to you.

So it ultimately becomes a form of taking. Because if you're not willing to get married to someone that you're sexually intimate with, what you're ultimately really saying is, I'm with you until someone better comes along. So ultimately it is driven by getting our needs met until they're not met, in which case we leave. And by the way, also lust can actually exist within and hurt marriages. This is not to say that marriage is exempt from this. And not only can people who are married struggle with lust for people who are not their spouse, which is a part of all marriages, part of being human, but it can also exist between a husband and a wife. If you're not emotionally intimate with your spouse, if you're not committed to loving and caring for and serving and meeting the needs of your spouse, then there could be a kind of disconnect in your sex life. And some couples really struggle with this. There is a difference between lovemaking and mutual masturbation, where you're using one another's bodies for sexual gratification without any of the loving and serving and commitment that is meant to contextualize it.

Right? So these are some examples of how lust actually can play out in our lives. But this is the nature of lust. This is what makes it distinct. Lust is an excessive desire for one's own sexual needs and sexual gratification. So this brings us to the second point, the dynamics of lust. How does lust actually work? Jesus says in Matthew 5, a pretty strong statement, right? He says in Matthew 5 that unless we deal with lust, he says, do whatever you've got to do. Cut an arm off, take an eye out, whatever you've got to do, because otherwise this is going to lead you, it's going to plunge you ultimately into hell. And you know, we hear that and it's sort of a bracing statement. That's a pretty extreme thing to say. But the word that he's using there for hell is actually the word Gehenna. And Gehenna was a very specific image. Gehenna is an actual place outside of the city where all the trash is taken out to be burned. And so the image of Gehenna is of a couple of things. There's an unquenchable fire, fire that is constantly consuming, constantly burning, but never going out, just burning, burning, burning. And then there are worms that are constantly consuming the garbage, consuming and consuming and consuming. And so this is actually a very fitting image for the dynamics of lust and how actually lust works and why it leads into a kind of hell on earth. Because, well, to give you another example, in C.S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters*, *Screwtape* is a demon who's teaching a younger demon how to enslave people. And at one point the topic of pleasure comes up.

[18 : 59] And *Screwtape* says, listen, you need to know that demons cannot create pleasure. He says, we've tried and tried and tried. It always fails. Only God can create pleasure, including sexual pleasure.

He says, so what we have to do as demons is we have to get the humans to misuse pleasure, to abuse it, to use it in ways that God never intended it to be used, to use it in ways that are disconnected from God. And listen to what he says here. An ever-increasing craving for an ever-diminishing pleasure is the formula. Isn't that a fantastic definition? An ever-increasing craving for an ever-diminishing pleasure. That is what lust is. That's how lust operates. It's an ever-increasing craving for an ever-diminishing pleasure. It's a fire that is always consuming, a worm that is always feeding, but is never full. And you see this clearly with pornography, right? Porn is highly addictive.

And over time, many people who use porn regularly, they find that they need more and more extreme or deviant forms of pornography to get the same high that they got when they first began to use it.

You build up a tolerance. Your brain actually does this. I don't know if anybody has seen the recent comedy special that came out from Chris Rock, but he gets very honest at one point about his porn addiction. He says this. This is Chris Rock. I was addicted to porn. When you watch too much porn, you know what happens? You become like sexually autistic. You develop sexual autism. You have a hard time with eye contact and verbal cues. You get desensitized. When you start watching porn, any porn will do. And then later on, you're all messed up and you need a perfect porn cocktail to get you off.

That's a very honest and very realistic description. And then he goes on to talk about the fact that his marriage is falling apart, that he committed infidelity and slept to the number of women and ultimately ended up divorcing this woman he's been married to for years. He's very honest about all this. You know, porn use is, some studies show that it makes you 300 times or 300% more likely to cheat on your spouse. Researchers can now see that porn use actually rewires your brain. And so a lot of people who are not Christians or religious in any way, shape, or form are nevertheless arguing that porn is a public health crisis, like smoking, and that we need to take this very seriously. I fully agree with that. But again, it's not just porn that we're talking about. Any sex outside of a covenant can follow the same pattern. And I want you to bear with me as I make this point.

[21 : 46] Initially, just think about dating. Just think about, you know, think about meeting somebody, dating somebody, but getting to that point where the relationships start to get physical. Initially, there's this thrill. There's this rush, right? It's this new person. It's this new life.

It's this new body. It's this new set of experiences that you've never had before. And for some people, there's the thrill of pursuit. And for other people, there's the thrill of being pursued and being desired and being wanted. And it makes you feel worthy and good. And there's that thrill and it brings this great dopamine hit. And the novelty is wonderful. But then that begins to fade and it gets more familiar. And people will hook up with people that they don't even really like because they want that thrill. But over time, that thrill begins to fade and it fades and it fades. And then at some point, you have to move on and find somebody else if you want that same thrill again. Because no matter how hard you try and no matter what you do, that thrill won't last. It's like the thrill that comes from looking at pornography or using drugs or any of the other things that we can begin to become addicted to. There's a high that we can never quite achieve again. And so over time, it fades. And so eventually, unless you have a covenant and you've committed to building a life together, which is an entirely different way of loving and enjoying somebody, you need to go elsewhere to get that same rush again. A lot of people just chase that thrill of novelty. A lot of people who get married continue to fantasize about that thrill of novelty, thinking that that's something to actually prioritize. Not realizing there's nothing compared to years and years and years building a life together. But this is why lust is so dangerous. Because it's never satisfied and it creates this restlessness. And the more we feed it, the more it burns and the more it longs for something more, something better, something more extreme, a better high. And so unless we deal with it, it will hurt not only us but society as a whole. It will plunge us into Gehenna.

You know, in David's life, you see that lust hurts his relationship with God. Lust leads him to severely mistreat Bathsheba. Lust leads him to murder his best friend and several other soldiers.

This leads to the death of his child. This down the road, this has an impact. The Bible implies that there's this impact on his family that goes outside of him and it spans generations after David. You see four of his children who suffer either violence or death. An extreme example is his own son Amnon.

Amnon rapes his half-sister Tamar. And the Bible sort of quietly suggests that there's this generational connection between David and the sin and the suffering of his children.

[24 : 46] You know, and it just keeps getting worse. It's like an ancient Near Eastern version of Breaking Bad. And then if we look at our own society, we see a similar kind of thing. We see that marriages are failing.

Porn addiction is on the rise among men and women. Sexual assault continues unabated despite centuries. Despite all of the money that even in the last few decades we've spent and all the education and all the legislation, it continues basically unabated. The hookup culture is making people miserable.

This is what drives sex trafficking, which has destroyed innumerable lives. Some of you work on that issue. Right? These are glimmers of Gehenna. Right? We're creating a hell here. So what is the answer?

Well, the answer is not easy, but it's there. The answer begins when we start to recognize something that is true not just about sexual desire, but all desire, all pleasure. And that is this, that no earthly pleasure can ever satisfy that longing in us. Pleasure cannot satisfy that longing because it was never meant to satisfy it. And you see this in John chapter 4. Jesus comes and he meets a woman by a well and they begin to talk about water. And Jesus says, well, there's a kind of water that if I gave it to you, it wouldn't be like this water. So you keep drinking this water and you keep getting thirsty again. But there's a kind of water that if I gave it to you, once you drank it, you would never be thirsty again. The woman, like any reasonable person says, give me this water.

And Jesus curiously, and it almost seems like he's, you know, like we've cut and pasted two unrelated bits of text together. Jesus says, bring me your husband. Why would he say that?

[26 : 49] And then she says, I don't have a husband. And he says, well, you speak truly. In fact, you've had five husbands and the man you're living with now is not your husband. And we begin to see what Jesus is doing. When he talks about her drinking water that will never satisfy her, he's not actually talking about the water in the well. He's talking about these men. And he's talking about the way that she has gone from one man to the next looking for a sense of worth, looking to feel loved, looking to feel chosen, looking to feel desired. And again and again and again it has failed to deliver. And he says, stop drinking from that well, that trash.

And he invites her, come, bring your life, bring your husband, bring your desires, bring all of this to me. And I will begin to give you a kind of water, a kind of nourishment that will lead to your ultimate satisfaction in a way that none of this could. And it's this amazing moment where we begin to see the answer to that longing in all of us. And this is actually what we see happen to David.

You know, David is doing it, you know, halfway through the story he's doing anything he can to keep this sin hidden. And that's human nature, right? When we know we've done something and we feel guilt and shame, human nature is to hide that thing. And he's hiding it from everybody else.

He's killing his friends just to make sure nobody knows about it, as if, as I said before, everybody doesn't already know. It's like the emperor with no clothes, right? He thinks that people actually don't know what happened. And then he's trying to hide it from himself.

And we see that in a second with Nathan. But at the very end of the chapter, chapter 11, it says, but this thing that David had done greatly displeased the Lord. And we see that God is not done with David. So God sends a prophet, the prophet Nathan to David. And Nathan tells David a story about a rich man and a poor man and how the rich man had all of these things. But when push came to shove, the rich man came and stole the one beloved possession, the one beloved treasure from the poor man. And David hears this story. And even though the law would say that when that kind of thing happened, that the man who was robbed should just be paid back fourfold, David greatly overreacts. He explodes and he says, this man deserves to die. And you know, I mean, long before Freud, we're seeing reaction formation in the Old Testament. Reaction formation is what Freud called, or actually his daughter called, our way of defending ourselves against things that we don't want to accept about ourselves. Right? So instead of accepting some hard truth about myself, I project it onto you. And I get really angry about it when I see it in you. And David is trying to suppress and hide this shameful thing that he's done. And so when he hears this story, it triggers all of that.

[29 : 58] And it comes out aimed at this fictitious character that Nathan has created. And once that anger comes out, the trap is sprung. And Nathan, in one of the greatest lines of the entire Bible says, you're the man. And David is unmasked. What some of our greatest fears center around being unmasked, being found out, being discovered. And yet for David, this was the greatest thing that ever could have happened to him. Because he falls to his knees and he repents. And Nathan says, it's okay.

God has forgiven you. God has put away your sin. And we say, well, how could God just put away sin like this? You know, he abused Bathsheba. He murdered her husband. How could God just overlook this? And the truth is, God doesn't just overlook it. This is the good news of the gospel, right?

That from David's lineage, God would one day raise up a greater king. Greater than David. And this king would be named Jesus. And this king, Jesus, would ultimately give his life, sacrifice himself, so that God could forgive all of the sins of all of his people for all time. And so you see this amazing contrast, while David is willing to kill in order to take Bathsheba for himself. Jesus was willing to die in order to set his beloved free. And that is the difference between lust and love. That's the difference. And so as we encounter that love, the love that comes to the cross, the love of Jesus Christ, that begins to change our hearts. That's the place to come with our shame and our longing and our guilt.

And we meet Jesus at the cross. And he deals with it. He takes it away, puts it away for all time, and sets us free to begin to learn how to drink the kind of water that will ultimately lead to not just our satisfaction, but our humanness, our wholeness.

So just to give you, I just want to end with a few concrete ways we can fight against lust in our lives. Number one, be vigilant. Be vigilant. This doesn't just happen to David. He doesn't get jumped.

[32 : 28] Right? The text specifically tells us that while David sends everyone else to fight the war, he stays behind. And this is a very important detail that the author uses to show us David's complacency.

You know, he's worked hard. He's put good years in. He's been faithful to God. And you know, you can begin to take little liberties. You know?

Just, I deserve this. I've been so faithful for so long. I deserve just to go out one night and have a good time. I've earned this. He becomes complacent.

And this is the author's way of setting us up. Oh, goodness. Something bad is going to happen. Right? Why was he out walking on the roof in the first place? Is this really the first time that David ever realized that he could look down and see women bathing on the roof?

You think this was an aberration? Vigilance means that we take the threat of lust and other sins very seriously. It means that we don't put ourselves or even expose ourselves to content or to situations that might inflame that within us because we take it seriously.

[33 : 36] We know that it can so quickly overwhelm our higher faculties. That we can so quickly lose our minds. You know, Billy Graham, who recently passed away, one of the things he was most known for was the Billy Graham rule, which said that he, you know, he said he would never travel alone with a woman who was not his wife.

And people like Mike Pence, you know, kind of followed that logic. And, you know, Graham and Pence and other people who have done that publicly have been mocked and criticized. But how many people can say that they had a 60-year career with no scandals?

You don't often hear that. So vigilance, very important. Number two, accountability. Everybody needs a Nathan in their life.

And Nathan is not just somebody who says, you know, I just want to check in. Is everything okay? You doing all right? A Nathan is somebody who can smell your BS a mile away. And that's why people with sex addiction who are really, really, really, really, really good at BSing their way along, almost by definition have to go to an anonymous group.

Because that's one of the only places you're going to find people who can actually see through you. But we also have at our church, we have triads. This is a way that we encourage people to build relationships of accountability and mutual encouragement.

[34 : 59] If you want to be in a triad, talk to the men's or women's ministry leaders. They're equipped to help you find a triad. We've got people signing up already. You know, there's a great illustration of accountability that comes from the Odyssey.

I love this. I've used it before. But in the Odyssey, at one point, Odysseus really wants to hear the sirens. But he knows that if he hears the sirens, hears their call, hears their song, that he will be compelled to go there and to stay there.

And he'll run his ship up on the rocks and they'll all die. And so he knows that he will lose control. And so he tells his men, before I hear the call of the sirens, I want you to lash me to the mast.

Lash me to the mast. And then I want you to all stop up your ears. And when we come within range of the siren song and I begin to hear it, and I begin to beg you to let me go, and I beg you to take me there, and I beg you, and I threaten you, and I say I'm going to flay you and kill you, and all of the threats that I make, no matter what I say, don't listen to me.

Because I'm out of my mind, and if you listen to me, we will all die. And so sure enough, that's what happens. And he gets within range, and he hears it, and he begins to thrash and freak out, but he has good men who do what they're told.

[36 : 12] And they don't let him go. And the hard thing about being a human being is we are all intelligent, reasonable, most of us very well-educated people, and yet we have to realize that at some point in our lives, we will all lose our minds.

And you need somebody to lash you to the mast and say, I don't care. You're not getting out of this marriage. You're not. I don't care what you feel for this person. I'm not letting this happen, right?

I'm sorry I smashed your laptop on the pavement. I'll get you another one. But for right now, you can't handle that.

We need people to lash us to the mast. Accountability. Lastly, thirdly, finally, a lifestyle of confession and repentance. It's not just a one-time thing.

The instinct with sin is always to hide it and minimize it. But if you read Psalm 32, you see David's joy when he finally confesses to the Lord.

[37 : 12] You see the liberation that that brings. And that's why we do this every week. We come before the Lord and we confess. We offer an opportunity to repent and then to hear the mercy of the Lord spoken over our lives.

And this is how we don't get driven by that shame cycle where we sin and then we hide and then we shame and then we sin and then we hide. And this is how we break out of that cycle. We confess to the Lord. We repent.

We hear of the Lord's mercy. It liberates us. And we take steps, progressive steps, toward freedom so that we're no longer enslaved in Egypt under the slave master of lust.

But rather we're learning how to live in the wilderness as God's promised people moving toward his promised land. And we can always come to Jesus with confidence knowing that the moment we go to our knees in confession, Jesus is already lifting us up in his embrace of mercy.

And that is the place where all of our longings will one day be satisfied. Let's pray.