

Reclaiming Your Eyes from Pornography

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I used to watch my dad brand cattle. I still remember the awful smell. The bovines would wail at the momentary pain, and the smoke from singed hair and burnt cowhide would rise into the afternoon sun. One by one the cattle would file through to receive the mark of our farm. Once branded, the cattle bore our mark forever. We owned them, and they had the scar to prove it.



Sin is like a brand, etched in our memories through constant practice. Like Pharaoh, who hardened his heart through disobedience, we calcify our own every time we sin. However, when the miracle of salvation happens to us, we are freed to start a new pattern and given a new heart to operate out of. But, some learned patterns of sin remain, and the consequences of a lifetime of sin stay too.

The lingering grip of sin

God is gracious to remove many earthly consequences in our lives, but he doesn't always do it. The separation that accompanies divorce and the subsequent broken relationships with children may never be repaired. You may even go to jail or stay there after God saves you. We are guaranteed salvation from the eternal penalty of sin, but not the temporal consequence.

For someone who was enslaved to pornography before Christ, there can be lasting consequences as well. Pornographic images get etched into your brain and can be damaging to your relationships for years to come. There are some images, good and bad, that seem like they will never leave the eyes of your mind—the funeral of someone you loved dearly, the birth of a child, your wedding, and other milestones. But, lingering in the shadows, there can also be shameful things. Buried beneath the beauty of forgiveness lie remembrances of foolish immorality—echoes of condemnation.

In moments of stress, in moments of weakness, and sometimes out of nowhere those unsavory images might invade your mind without reason. Even though, by God's grace, you may have not sought out pornography for years, the images may remain—a continual testimony to your past life, gnawing at your conscience, attacking your faith, and blurring your hope.

How New Covenant glory can heal you

When Paul is addressing the Corinthians about the kind of ministry he is involved in on their behalf, he describes the Old Covenant as a ministry of death and condemnation (2 Cor 3:7, 9). He tells them that he and others like him are ministers of a New Covenant that is life and righteousness (2 Cor 3:6, 9). The problem is, there is a veil over the hearts of unbelievers, such that they cannot see how glorious the New really is. But, Paul says, Jesus can take the veil away! He goes on to say,

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. - 2 Corinthians 3:17-18

The New Covenant has the ability to transform. The Old could never do that because it wasn't designed that way. The glory of Christ revealed in his sacrificial death and resurrection can change what's inside you. It can invade your mind and heart, so that your image becomes more like His, completely free and without harmful remembrance of past sin.

Let the unveiled image of Christ burn into the eyes of your heart. This is the hope of transformation. It's not enough to stop the input of harmful images, when memories continue their vehement haunt. The residual stains of past sin need eradicated from your mind and heart. And there is only one way to that good end—the glory of God in the face of Christ.

What do you see?

What will you find when you see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Cor 4:4)? Forgiveness for every single sexual sin, the eternal worth and weight of Jesus Christ, and extravagant grace for every weakness. Instead of the condemnation that accompanies every recalling of sin, you will see life. Over and over there is light and life in the gospel for you if you will just look at it. The antidote for images you used to look at is the new and better image—the glory of Christ.

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. - 2 Corinthians 4:6