

# Watch Over Your Heart With All Diligence

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## **HOST: David Wheaton:**

Watch Over Your Heart With All Diligence. That is a topic we'll discuss today right here on The Christian Worldview Radio Program where the mission is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. I'm David Wheaton the host, and our website is [TheChristianWorldview.org](http://TheChristianWorldview.org).

On Thursday, September 19th, a statement was released from Trinity Bible Church in Dallas announcing that their Pastor, "Steven J. Lawson, has been removed indefinitely from all ministry activities at Trinity Bible Church of Dallas." Several days ago, the statement went on to say "the elders at Trinity Bible Church of Dallas were informed by Steve Lawson of an inappropriate relationship that he has had with a woman."

The shocks of this earthquake were immediately felt throughout the evangelical Christian world. How could the 73-year-old, popular and influential theologically conservative pastor and preacher who had been in ministry for nearly 50 years, who preached at the biggest conferences around the world, who was a preacher to aspiring preachers, who had written dozens of books on Christian doctrine, history and practice, how could he fall into this kind of disqualifying sin? Someone once said, the best of men are men at best, or Scripture puts it even better, "*The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick, who can understand it.*" That's from Jeremiah 17:9, and that means all men and women. Great preachers and also you and me.

We will discuss this tragic story today on The Christian Worldview Radio Program, not in any way to judge a man, but so that all of us would "*watch over our hearts with all diligence for from it, the heart, flow the springs of life.*" That's Proverbs 4:23. Who is Steve Lawson? What happened here and why is this such a significant story and why are we even doing this topic? It sounds salacious and like gossip.

Number one, it's not to kick Steve Lawson while he is down. He's been a preacher that I have benefited greatly from over the years.

Number two, Scripture includes the failings of great men like King David for our instruction and warning to examine ourselves to see if there are any patterns in my own life, in your life that may lead to something like this.

And number three, to remind ourselves to keep our eyes on Christ, never on any man. Who is Steve Lawson? Well, if you look at the broad categories of Protestant Christianity, you have the mainline denominations like the ELCA, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, or the Anglicans, or the United Methodist Church, or

the United Church of Christ. This category or group is politically and theologically liberal. You also have the category of the Charismatics and the health, wealth and prosperity movement. People like Bill Johnson at Bethel Church Redding, California, Kenneth Copeland, Joyce Meyer, or Joel Osteen. Again, these are just broad categories of Protestant Christianity. You also have the fundamentalists, the independent fundamental Baptist churches, not as well-known because of their emphasis on separation from the world and most of evangelicalism, but that's a category in there.

You have the more moderate evangelical movement with people like Rick Warren, Pastor J.D. Greear, maybe Andy Stanley. And then you get to another segment. Again, these are just broad categories of what I would call the conservative evangelical movement. This would be pastors like John MacArthur, Alistair Begg, Voddie Baucham, Paul Washer, R.C. Sproul, John Piper, Al Mohler are in that conservative evangelical group. They believe and teach the five Solas of the reformation that we're saved by God's grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. And the gospel comes from Scripture alone and it's all for the glory of God alone. They have a high view of Scripture. They preach in an expository manner verse by verse through books of the Bible rather than topical or motivational type messages. God's sovereignty in salvation and man's responsibility to repent and believe God's gospel is emphasized. They're mostly cessationists, although not all. Some believe in the continuation of the supernatural sign gifts. And they certainly believe in the biblical pattern for male-only pastors and elders.

Examples of some of the conferences that are known within this conservative evangelical movement will be Shepherd's Conference out of John MacArthur's Church, or G3 Ministries has conferences throughout the year or the Ligonier Conference. With that as a broad categorization of Protestant Christianity, Steve Lawson, I would say, was one of the top five or for sure the top 10 most well-known and well-respected pastors in the conservative evangelical group or category of Protestant Christianity. Not only was he a pastor of a church in Dallas, but he led his own ministry that was called OnePassion. And just reading from his bio there to give you an idea of his scope of this ministry in life: "Dr. Steven J. Lawson is founder and president of OnePassion Ministries, a ministry designed to equip and energize a new generation of Bible expositors."

The focus of Dr. Lawson's ministry is the verse by verse exposition, there's the expository preaching part, of God's Word in training other men to do the same. He's the author of 28 books and I won't list them all here. Dr. Lawson is a teaching fellow with Ligonier Ministries, a professor of preaching and Dean of the Doctor of Ministry program at The Master's Seminary, and executive editor for Expositor Magazine. He is also on the board of The Master's University and Seminary, Ligonier Ministries and Reformation Bible College. This is an extensive biography. Dr. Lawson is a graduate of Texas Tech, Dallas Theological Seminary and Reform Theological Seminary. He served as a pastor in Arkansas and Alabama for 34 years and presently lives in Dallas, Texas where he was the pastor of Trinity Bible Church. He and his wife Anne have three adult sons and an adult daughter. He has had a very extensive and influential life of preaching and ministry.

As I mentioned, he was frequently a keynote preacher at most of the major conservative evangelical conferences. At Shepherds Conference, that I've attended many times, he typically preached right before John MacArthur. He filled the pulpit at Grace Community Church frequently for John MacArthur, and he was a great preacher by the way — Scriptural accuracy, passion, conviction, delivery, call to believe the gospel. I could play audio clips of him all program today (and we have over the years in the program), but that just seems too dissonant to do that now with the news that has come out.

Personally, I first heard of Steve Lawson around 2005 at Shepherds Conference. He wasn't very well-known back then. It was an afternoon session. The message was titled, *Bring the Book* from Nehemiah chapter eight, where Ezra who was a prophet and priest takes out God's Word and reads it at length to the people who have returned from exile in Babylon, and it was an absolutely riveting message. I will never forget it. People in the audience were groaning audibly over the power of the Word of God being preached and that particular message put Steve Lawson squarely on my radar.

I have personally met Steve several times at Expositors Conference at his church when he was pastoring in Mobile Alabama. I met him at Shepherds Conference. He's been a guest on this program, as you probably know, many times over the years, he was a favorite guest on this program. I would put him in the top five of preachers who have impacted me personally in my understanding of Scripture. He's not a close friend of mine. I'm not in contact with him, but he was certainly someone I knew and respected. To summarize this lead-up to who he is, not too many other preachers living in the world today would send greater shock waves when that announcement from Trinity Bible Church or this one from his own ministry, OnePassion, became public.

About a week ago, the board of OnePassion Ministries mournfully announces that just recently, Steven J. Lawson confessed to the board that he has had an inappropriate relationship with a woman. I think they could have chosen a better word there, a sin that has disqualified him from ministry. In response, Steve has resigned from all his duties at OnePassion Ministries. All scheduled events and engagements have been canceled. Steve has confessed and regrets the damage he has caused to his family, the church, the reputation of OnePassion Ministries and most of all, Jesus Christ. Again, just shocking news. I read part of the statement from Trinity Bible Church.

Also, The Master's Seminary perhaps made the strongest statement of all, "It has now become clear that Steve failed to uphold the biblical qualifications for elders and spiritual leaders outlined in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus chapter one, specifically failing to be a one-woman man because he is no longer above reproach and that phrase is used in that passage in 1 Timothy 3. He has permanently disqualified himself from ministry. As a result, he can no longer be a part of the faculty of The Master's Seminary. He will also no longer be involved in our Doctor of Ministry program, nor will he be affiliated with our ministries at any level.

The church is the pillar in support of the truth, shining is a bright light in this world of darkness. The integrity and trustworthiness of its leadership is essential to the credibility of its witness. This is why Paul insisted that spiritual leaders must be above reproach for the sake of Christ's name and the proclamation of the gospel. Failure to do so represents a profound breach of integrity and betrayal of trust. Ministers of the gospel of Jesus Christ are subject to the highest accountability to God's standard. The stricter judgment of James 3:1," We'll read that later. "This applies to all who take up the sobering task of declaring God to His people."

It goes on, but I won't take time to read it. You can read all of these online. His church still hasn't announced the nature or the timeframe of this, not inappropriate, but sinful relationship. Not a word has been heard from Steve Lawson himself yet, and that's disconcerting from a man with such a public ministry outside of his own local church. Details have leaked out from a couple of sources about the nature and timeframe, but we're not going to share those until his church and others have done thorough investigation because for now, any details would've only come from Steve and/or the woman and that really can't be trusted at this point.

The nature of the relationship and the timing are important for the elders and members of his church and those who sat under his preaching, who supported his ministry, who bought his books to know. An ongoing sinful relationship for years, while carrying on and preaching in a ministry is worse than, let's say, flirtatious text messages that started two weeks ago. Yes, both sinful, but the former is much more egregious than the latter.

There is an unspoken agreement when a man is preaching that he is living out the Word of God, that he is preaching and not playing the hypocrite. As in the Word of God, has sanctified the preacher and it can sanctify you. You who are being preached to. Preaching God's Word without being, quote, above reproach, literally cancels everything being preached because the man isn't even qualified to preach in God's eyes. Don't pastors do this all the time? I've read recently that there have been 16 pastors in Dallas alone this year who have been involved in these types of scandals. Can't Steve Lawson just sit on the sidelines for a while and take a timeout and then come back to preaching? Let's read what's been referenced already, the qualifications for a pastor in 1 Timothy 3 and notice that all the qualifications, except for one, are based on the man's character and only one is based on an actual skill of being able to teach.

1 Timothy 3, "It is a trustworthy statement," Paul writes, "If any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer or pastor then must be," and here's the headline, "must be above reproach." I'll insert, so that no criticism can be made of the following. "He must be the husband of one wife, temperate," it means self-restrained, "prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach," there's the one based on skill. Back to character, "Not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity. But if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God. And not a new convert so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by

the devil? He must have a good reputation with those outside the church so that he will not fall into reproach in the snare of the devil." That's from 1 Timothy 3.

Now pastors of course, are not sinless, but these qualities in that list must characterize them. If not, they're not above reproach and qualified to be a pastor or a preacher. Pastors must be more sanctified than who they're preaching to because they're responsible for shepherding us to be more holy, more like Christ. The big deal here is that Steve Lawson broke the covenant that he made to God in being ordained as a pastor, he broke his marriage vows and he broke the character qualifications for leading his church in ministry and he broke trust with those he preached to, and that's why he's been disqualified. His adultery here, whether it was a spiritual, emotional adultery or an actual act of adultery, has brought shame upon Christ's church. As Prophet Nathan told King David after his adultery, "By this deed, you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme." And as you read on social media, that has been what is taking place in many corners of it. He has also disheartened those who have sat under him.

He has destabilized many people who have heard him preach, as in "Woah, if Lawson can be overcome by this, can I? Is it even possible to live to honor God?" And this has caused tremendous loss for him personally. Permanently disqualified, as The Master's Seminary put it. He has lost almost everything, his entire ministry. And it's jarring. We don't know what will happen to his longtime marriage to his wife, what the impact will be on his grown children. The impact of the woman who he was or still is involved with. Sin can seem so secret, but when it meets the light of day, the earthquakes and aftershocks are just large. Over the past week, I've thought often that I can't even imagine what he and his family, his church, and many others are going through. All involved in this, including the woman, need our prayer.

The question is, why would a man who has studied and preached the Word of God for about 50 years, choose to get involved in this type of sin? The answer is it's shocking, but it's actually not shocking because the Bible describes what our hearts are like, all of our hearts, "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick, who can understand it?" Well, we'll try to understand it some next here on The Christian Worldview Radio Program. I'm David Wheaton.

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Our topic today is Watch Over Your Heart With All Diligence, in light of the sobering news about Pastor Steven Lawson. In this segment we're going to ask the question, how could this happen to someone like Pastor Steve Lawson or really by extension, how could it happen to any believer when we know better? No one saw this coming simply because we can't look into a person's heart like God does. We don't know what's going on there. Steve Lawson was prominent and for good reason. He was skilled in study of the Word, interpretation, writing, speaking, preaching. So, it makes the point that knowledge is not a hedge against sin. Writing books is not a hedge. Sound doctrine isn't even a hedge against sin.

Prominent preaching platforms is not a hedge against sin. It doesn't matter how much you know, how well you preach or how long you've been in ministry or how acclaimed you are. No one gets beyond the possibility of succumbing to this kind of disqualifying sin. Yes, the more sanctified you become, the more you love the Lord with all your heart and your soul and your mind and your strength, the less likelihood of egregious sin. But every believer still lives in their unredeemed flesh. At conversion, God regenerates our soul, our spirit, but that regenerated soul and spirit still reside in unregenerate flesh, which is a body and a mind that has sinful desires that demand to be fed. Listen to this important passage from Galatians chapter five starting in verse 16, "But I say," Paul writes to the Galatians, "walk by the spirit," the Holy Spirit, "and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the spirit," the Holy Spirit, "and the spirit against the flesh. For these are an opposition to one another so that you may not do the things that you please."

There's a battle within between the Holy Spirit, which is given to indwell the believer at the point of justification or conversion and this unredeemed flesh that still resides there. It's a war verse 18, but if you are led by the Holy Spirit, you are not under the law. Now, the deeds of the flesh are evident. These are the things that our flesh wants to do, which are immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing and things like these. As if that's not enough, "Of which I forewarn you," Paul writes, "Just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice ongoing regular occurrence of such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." All those sins, those deeds of the flesh are inside of us. Even the believer, they're there and they want to come out, they want to be fulfilled and fed.

But then Paul writes in verse 22, he says, "The fruit of the Holy Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such things, there is no law." In other words, those things, when you are saved, the Holy Spirit brings inside of you so you can live according to the fruit of the Holy Spirit and overcome all those fleshly desires in your unredeemed flesh. Verse 24, "Now those who belong to Christ Jesus," so true believers, "have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires." That should be the pattern of a believer. It doesn't mean the believer will be perfect, but that should be the pattern for a believer to crucify those deeds of the flesh. Verse 25, "If we live by the Holy Spirit, let us also walk by the Holy Spirit. Let us not become boastful, become proud, challenging one another, envying one another."

What a powerful passage about this battle which goes on inside the believer between the Holy Spirit and this unredeemed flesh. Paul personalizes it in Romans chapter 7 toward the end of that chapter. And it's such a graphic description of this war that the Apostle Paul of all people, talk about a prominent believer. Let's listen to him where he describes what's going on inside of him. He writes in Romans 7:18, "For I know that nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh. For the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do. But I practice the very evil that I do not want." Verse 20, "But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin dwells in me. I find then the principle

that evil is present in me," there is the unredeemed flesh, "the one who wants to do good." There's a battle going on.

Verse 22, "For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin, which is in my members. Wretched man that I am," he says, "Who will set me free from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Then on the one hand, I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other hand, with my flesh, the law of sin. How graphically descriptive is that and the true believer should actually feel that. We should have these desires inside of us to want to serve the Lord, but we will also feel our unredeemed flesh warring against that.

Every redeemed Christian lives in unredeemable flesh. There's a war within. And our whole life, to the very end, is about winning the war over your flesh. Only when we die does the flesh die. Not only do we have this battle that Paul describes there in Galatians and in Romans chapter seven within our flesh, but we also have a deceptive enemy who's trying to take us down. 1 Peter 5:8, "Be of sober spirit. Be on the alert, your adversary, the devil prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour but resist him firm in your faith knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world." That really says two things. Satan's trying to take believers out, but resist him, knowing that other believers are suffering the same types of things. Satan and his minions know each believer very well.

They know our own particular lusts. They patiently wait and arrange circumstances and relationships in order to destroy and to devour us. In James chapter one, he writes, "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust." In other words, each of us has our own distinct lusts from one another. Everyone's not the same. Verse 15, then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. In verse 16, he says, "Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren." So, we need to be very aware and alert to this war going on inside the believer and how Satan is trying to devour us. There are countless ways that Satan and the world around us try to entice this unredeemed flesh. Listen to 1 John 2, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life is not from the father but is from the world."

Do you notice those three things, the lust of the flesh? These are sinful desires to please the body, the flesh, sexual immorality, maybe alcohol, drugs, maybe even food, please the body. Number two, lust of the eyes. It's I see it, I want it. It's material possessions, getting more and more of things or the boastful pride of life. This is about attaining position or influence or acclaim. It's the pride of I've made it. So, the believer, and especially someone like Steve Lawson who preaches the Word is what I would call a high value target. Take him down and many get disheartened and destabilized. The faith is mocked and the name of Christ is besmirched. This past Sunday at Grace Community Church where John MacArthur is the pastor and where Steve Lawson frequently preached, one of the associate pastors there named Mike Riccardi was scheduled to

preach on one passage but changed his sermon in light of the news about Steve Lawson and just listen to how he describes the sinfulness of sin.

**Audio: Mike Ricardi:**

You and I don't hate sin enough. Sure, when we hear a report of some scandal in which sin has ruined lives on a grand scale, we're shocked, we're grieved, we're heartbroken, even outraged at the havoc that sin can wreak. In those moments, it seems easy to hate sin, but then time passes. We return to our lives. Sin seems to crawl back under the rock that it came from, and we forget that sin still lives in each one of us. As much as believers in Jesus have been freed from the penalty of sin in justification, and as much as we have been freed from the power of sin in definitive sanctification, nevertheless, we have not yet been freed from the presence of sin in our flesh. Sin remains in us. And if we don't go to war with it, if we make peace with the presence of sin in our flesh, we become vulnerable to the very deception and destruction that we lament when we see it in others.

Sin has devoured better men and women than you and me. And if not for the sheer grace of God, sin would absolutely ruin each and every one of us. So, we must beg God for grace. Oh God, keep me. Please keep me. Do not give me over to my fleshly desires. Give me so much grace that I might not dishonor you, that I might finish my race faithfully without our attending to the means of grace without bringing our hearts into subjection, to the searching life-giving light of Scripture, without being ruthless with our flesh and giving it no quarter, without our constant attention to putting to death the deeds of the body, sin would have its way with us as well. Each of you is vulnerable to falling prey to that devious devourer that still resides in your flesh. How will you avoid the devastation and destruction that sin desires to inflict upon you?

We don't hate sin enough. We treat it as if it's a trifle to be dallied with rather than a cancer to be killed. Sin looks pleasant to us, or at least it looks like it's not that big of a deal. We tolerate it so much in our lives, but when the Lord sees fit to show us the great destruction that sin can inflict, in those times, sin appears more clearly to us in all its naked deformity, all its unmasked ugliness. Because in the hour of temptation, when sin presents itself to our souls, it entices us with painted beauty, with false pleasure, with the lies that it can satisfy us, that it is more to be desired than holiness and integrity and faithfulness to Christ. And in that moment of temptation, the only way to fight is to refute those lies. It's to flood our minds with the truth of the wretchedness of sin, that it is perfectly miserable and that holiness and faithfulness to the Lord and communion with him is more beautiful and satisfying and glorious than anything sin could offer us.

**HOST: David Wheaton:**

Our topic today is Watch Over Your Heart With All Diligence in light of the sobering news about Pastor Steven Lawson. How to overcome temptation to sin in your own life. In this circumstance we're discussing today with Steve Lawson, no one but Steve the woman know the circumstances that led to this sin, but here's what the Bible says. We are all going to be tempted to sin, but the good news is God promises to provide the



way of escape and that way of escape must be taken. Otherwise, a first compromise, even if small turns into a second and then a third and then compounds deeper into sin.

The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 10 describes how the Jews in the Old Testament at the time of the Exodus saw the miracles of God firsthand the parting of the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night, the water coming from the rock for them, manna from heaven, but it says they still craved evil despite seeing the works of God on a regular basis. 1 Corinthians 10 starting in verse six, "Now these things," what they experienced in the Exodus, "happened as examples for us," speaking to New Testament Christians now, "so that we would not crave evil things as they also crave," there's that evil unredeemed flesh inside of us, "do not be idolaters as some of them were as it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink and stood up to play.' Nor let us act immorally as some of them did and 23,000 fell in one day, or let us try the Lord or test Him as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents, nor grumble as some of them did and were destroyed by the destroyer."

Now, these things happen to them, these Old Testament Israelites as an example, and they were written for our instruction upon whom the ends of the ages have come. As I mentioned right at the beginning of the program today, this is why we're doing this program, not in any way to condemn and pile on Steve Lawson. No, this program today is for our instruction, not for our self-righteousness, oh I would never do that, or condescension. It's to learn from this story about how we can walk more circumspectly and avoid this kind of sin.

And then he says in verse 12 of 1 Corinthians 10, "Therefore," this is important, "let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall." If you think you are above and beyond this, you better take heed that you do not fall into something like this. Verse 13, here's the promise, "No temptation has overtaken you, but such as is common to man. And God is faithful who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able. But with the temptation will provide the way of escape also so that you will be able to endure it. And this is the good news." Well, anyone has the capacity to sin. We're not helpless. It's not fate. No, our temptations are common to others and God is faithful to provide the way of escape. But there's a big but here, there are things we must do to escape.

Number one, we must take the tempting thoughts that tempt us to sin and they must be immediately replaced with a truthful response from Scripture. Just like Jesus when he was tempted by Satan, what did he say? Three times? It is written, it is written, it is written quoting Scripture. Just like King David did not do when he walked out on his roof and saw Bathsheba bathing. Instead of replacing that tempting thought and diverting his eyes, he lingered over it and then a look became a lust and then became physical adultery and eventually, murder of her husband. So, number one, a tempting thought must be immediately replaced with truth.

Number two, the wave of escape that God promises must be taken. Think of it like going down a highway towards sin. If you drive past the first exit that God provides and then the second and then the third to get off this highway to sin, it becomes harder and harder to exit because we become closer to the sin and it becomes more alluring. We start looking at the temptation through a microscope, so it's enlarged. It consumes our thoughts. We don't see the bigger picture on what this is going to cost us or how it's going to dishonor God, and we don't run away. We just keep going. So, if the way of escape isn't taken, temptation becomes a sinful lust, which then becomes a sinful action. It's always the same pattern.

Recently, I was reading the chapters leading up to David's sin with Bathsheba in the second book of Samuel. And you could see how David's life was being set up for what happened with Bathsheba, his sin with her. He was prospering. There was peace in his kingdom. We find him not leading his army into war. That's a responsibility his duty, he should have been doing that, but we find him home from the battle sleeping, actually later in the day. There were circumstances aligning in his life that were conducive for him to walk on his roof and there was Bathsheba bathing and then to not divert his eyes. Instead of recognizing the temptation immediately and replacing it with the truth of Scripture, well, that woman is not my wife, divert my eyes or thou shalt not commit adultery, go back inside. The temptation was lingered upon. It turned into lust, a sinful lust, and then turned into adulterous action, and the consequences were devastating.

I once heard a pastor say, the human mind can rationalize any sin, and I think that is the case. We can deceive ourselves that the wrong road we're on isn't so wrong. There's really only one key to overcoming temptation, just one. Accountability partners or accountability groups are good, but you can deceive accountability partners. Reading your Bible, going to church, being in Bible study is good and important, but knowledge and sound doctrine and fellowship don't necessarily keep you from sin. You can get around it. Or separating yourself from environments, having boundaries where sin can occur, that's a wise thing to do, like not being alone with a woman that's not your wife, but that even doesn't guarantee because you're going to have time on your own where you can sin or when you find yourself in an unusually tempting environment. The main thing to focus on to overcome our sin is to have a heart that continually loves and fears God.

Jesus said in Matthew 15:19, "For out of the heart come evil thoughts." Murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness or lying slanders. The heart is the seat of our affections, what we love and desires. It is also the source of where sin springs out of. That's why we have to primarily focus on our hearts. You can know the right thing to do in your mind as Paul was writing about in Romans 7, and it can be overrun by your sinful affections and desires, your lusts. If you allow sinful affections or lusts and desires to germinate in your heart, to grow a little bit, it's only a matter of time before they take root and appear in your actions. To fear the Lord is to have great reverence for Him. It's understanding that God is omnipresent and omniscient, that He's holy and that we are accountable to Him for everything we think, say and do.

He sees our thoughts, our actions, our words. We often look around horizontally to see if anyone sees what we're doing, but we fail to look up because God's always watching. It's a literal fear of displeasing God. Do you remember what Joseph said in Genesis chapter 39 after he had been sold into Egypt and he was a slave in Potiphar's house who was the captain of the guard for Pharaoh, and he's a young man and Potiphar's house is prospering because of Joseph being there? One time when he was alone in the house, there it is with Potiphar's wife, Potiphar's wife propositions him for sex. It's very instructive how Joseph responded. He did not respond to her sexual proposition by saying, I can't do this. You might get pregnant. Or he didn't say, someone might find out about this or I might lose my job in this house.

How he responded says everything about the importance of one's heart. He said this, "How then could I do this great evil in sin against God?" In other words, he had a fear and love for God in his heart that was far greater than any desire he had in inside of himself to please himself. In that moment of temptation, he had a choice, will I choose to please God or will I choose to please myself? And he chose to please God, and then he took action and he fled from her midst. We can't live a compartmentalized Christian life as in it's something we pursue only at certain times of the day or week, and then other times, we just live like anyone else in the world. No, the Lord must be the focus of our heart and our mind at all times. How do you get a heart like that? That seems impossible.

You need to draw near to God in His Word and prayer daily. You need to be worshiping and fellowshiping in your local church with other believers. You need to be accountable to your pastors. Your pastors need to know you and you need to know them. You need to confess and repent of sin quickly. You need to cultivate a close relationship with God. As Scripture says, draw near to God and he will draw near to you. How does any relationship deepen through spending time with someone in communication with that person? It's the same thing with the Lord. Okay, so we've talked about the process of how we succumb to sin, but how we can overcome it. Let's go full circle back to where we started with Steve Lawson today. How should we respond to this news of Steve Lawson? Because it's been incredibly disappointing, discouraging, disheartening to so many people who have sat under his preaching and of course, mostly to his wife and his family and his church.

I think it actually partly depends on how Steve Lawson responds. It's disconcerting to me that as of the time of this broadcast being turned in, there has been no statement from him for a week or so here. There could be valid reasons for that, perhaps legal reasons or his church has told him to not make a statement until they've investigated the matter. But if he doesn't respond at all or responds in denial and defensiveness, in non-repentance, his church needs to reprove and rebuke and discipline him per Matthew chapter 18. But if he responds in repentance, every believer needs to pray for his restoration. I heard one person say he may be disqualified from ministry, but he's not disqualified from God's grace if he repents. No one, not Steve Lawson you or me who sins even egregiously, is disqualified from God's grace. That's how great God's grace in mercy is. Only the one who persists in non-repentance will pay the penalty for their own sin.

King David took a while to repent after his sin with Bathsheba. It wasn't until Nathan the prophet confronted him, but when David did repent, listen to what he wrote in Psalm chapter 51. He said, "Create in me a clean heart, oh God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from your presence and do not take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation," and that's what every believer should want, "and sustain me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways and sinners will be converted to you." Psalm 51:10-13. So, God can still do good restorative work in the life of Steve Lawson or anyone that falls into egregious sin. We should not respond to this by just ignoring it and moving on.

All of us need to consider this story so that we can examine our own lives and our own patterns to see where changes need to be made. No one should ever respond to this, I would never do something like that. That's just pride. You don't understand your own sinfulness and you're setting yourself up for a fall if that's your mentality. No one should respond in a lighthearted or mocking manner, like men will be men. I'm hearing some people say, who didn't like the way Steve Lawson preached about God's sovereignty say, "Well, God ordained this. Right?" This whole thing is a very serious breach of a pastor's calling, and that's why Scripture says in 1 Timothy 4:16, "Pay close attention to yourself," Paul writing to Timothy, "and to your teaching. Persevere in these things. For as you do this, you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you."

Or James 3:1, listen to this, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such, we will incur a stricter judgment." Or 1 Corinthians chapter 9: 26,27, "Therefore," Paul writes, "I run in such a way as not without aim. I box in such a way as not beating the air, but I discipline my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified." That's where the doctrine of the disqualification of a pastor is when his life is no longer above reproach. So, let's pray for Steve Lawson. Let's earnestly pray for his wife and for his family, and for the other woman involved. We don't even know who she is. Let's pray for the church and for all the people who have looked up to him and pray that God might somehow work this together for good, as it says in Romans 8:28.

This doesn't need to be the end of Steve Lawson's life or the other woman's life. If there's repentance, God will do His good work here. And for you and me, we don't need to fear. We can overcome temptation even though we are weak. God will provide the way of escape. His Word and His Holy Spirit give us the power to overcome what you feel powerless to handle. He gives us the strength to take the proper steps to keep you from situations and environments that lead into sin. But the most important thing for us to focus on is to daily cultivate a love and fear of God, to watch over your heart with all diligence, for out of it flow the issues of life because the temporary pleasures of sin are never worth the enduring consequences.

Satan always shows us the beautiful, enticing, beginning of the way, never the disastrous end. And the most satisfying joy in life is believing in God's gospel and then drawing near to Him daily. That is where there is eternal joy. Let us regularly remind ourselves of that truth.

Thank you for joining us today on the Christian Worldview radio program, and for your support of this nonprofit radio ministry. Let's be reminded what Scripture says, that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever, and that nearness to Him is the fullness of joy. Until next time, think biblically, live accordingly and stand firm.

The mission of the Christian worldview is to sharpen the biblical worldview of Christians and to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. We hope today's broadcast encouraged you toward that end. To hear a replay of today's program, order a transcript or find out what must I do to be saved, go to [thechristianworldview.org](http://thechristianworldview.org) or call toll-free 888-646-2233. The Christian Worldview is a listener-supported, non-profit radio ministry furnished by the Overcomer Foundation. To make a donation, become a Christian Worldview partner, order resources, subscribe to our free newsletter, or contact us, visit [thechristianworldview.org](http://thechristianworldview.org), call 888-646-2233 or, write to Box 401 Excelsior, Minnesota 55331. Thanks for listening to the Christian Worldview.