

Session 8 Overcoming the Spirit of Immorality

Please refer to the teaching notes for this message.

INTRODUCTION

Matthew 5. We're continuing on our series on the Sermon on the Mount. In session eight of this series we're addressing Matthew 5:27-30, where Jesus calls His disciples to overcome the spirit of immorality. I believe that when Jesus gave this message He was speaking in a very tender way. Why? Because He desires to help the ones He loves.

Here's why I say that: sometimes we have this false dichotomy between tender and bold. If we're tender we lower the standards and say, "Ah, gee, we understand." If we're bold, we say, "Get with it!" So boldness sometimes goes with being harsh, and tenderness goes with compromise. No. We don't have to pick between the two. We can be bold and tender and uncompromising in this message about overcoming immorality, because it's really a message about love.

This is really a message about love, and it's for everyone in the Body of Christ. Some of you might be here saying, "You know, I'm not really dealing with this issue, but I know someone who is." The Lord wants you to be equipped to counsel them from the biblical perspective, and He wants you equipped to warn them from the biblical perspective. It's not enough just to say, "I know immorality is no good." We need to be able to break it down with the Bible when we're ministering to other people. So this message is for everyone. The whole Sermon on the Mount is.

Let's read Matthew 5:27-30. "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery'" (Mt. 5:27). So the Pharisees are teaching the Ten Commandments. The seventh commandment is this: "You shall not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14). He says, "You've heard their teaching; but they haven't given you the whole message. They've minimized it; they've reduced it to a bare minimum because they don't understand God's heart or His original intention."

So in verse 28 He says, "I'm going to tell you the bigger message that was intended in the heart of God back in Exodus 20, when the Ten Commandments were originally given" (Mt. 5:28, paraphrased). "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (ibid, NKJV).

Now this is a revolutionary idea. He's saying, "The Pharisees say that as long as you avoid the physical act of adultery you're free of immorality." He says, "No, you're not. I'm not trying to be mean; I'm trying to be helpful. I want to liberate you. I want you to be exhilarated in your spirit. You have to know that even in looking on a woman to lust, immorality is working in you long before you commit the physical act of adultery." He says, "The problem is there and I want to help you diagnose it so that you can get delivered of it so that you can enter into the freedom and the glory of what I've called you to be as My people."

He goes on to say something even more revolutionary than what He just said in verse 28. Verse 29 is so radical. "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell" (Mt. 5:29). If your right eye causes you to sin related to immorality, pluck it out.

“What?”

He says, “Cut your eye out.”

Now Jesus isn’t talking about physical mutilation; He’s talking about spiritual self-denial. We’ll address this in a few moments. He’s saying, “Be radical in your life choices even though you have to deny yourself in doing so.” He says, “What is more profitable, for one of your members to perish or your whole body, your whole person to be thrown into hell?”

In verse 30, He says it a little differently. He says, “And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell” (Mt. 5:30). He says, “I’m arguing for your benefit. I want you to see the benefit of embracing this reality in the spirit that I’m presenting to you.”

Now in context, Jesus is calling His disciples to the importance of resisting the spirit of immorality, not waiting until physical adultery is presented as a temptation, because long before that it’s already pervasive and working in people’s lives.

Now the Pharisees taught that you didn’t have any problems with the spirit of immorality as long as you avoided the physical act. They were unaware that they had a sickness that they were not addressing. That sickness was growing in them, and it was injuring and defiling them but they didn’t know it.

So again, Jesus is talking about love right now. He’s not talking about strict, religious, rigid standards. He’s talking about love and liberty in the Spirit and how to walk in it. Remember the context: just a few verses earlier, in verses 3-12, He gave the eight beatitudes. He said, “Blessed are the pure in heart” (Mt. 5:8). He said, “You can have a vibrant spirit. You can be exhilarated in God.” He just laid it all out there, talking about how we can be exhilarated in our walk with God. He said, “This will actually minimize your ability to experience God. I’m trying to help you.” So this isn’t harsh, angry, holiness preaching; He isn’t approaching it that way at all.

THIS IS NOT A COMPREHENSIVE TEACHING ON FREEDOM FROM IMMORALITY

Paragraph B. Now it’s important that we know He isn’t giving a comprehensive teaching on freedom from sexual addiction. There are other principles involved in the comprehensive teaching. At the end of page four I list about seven or eight of them. That’s not the point right now. Jesus is identifying two very significant principles in the pursuit of overcoming the spirit of immorality. He’s identifying two of them and saying, “Alert, alert, alert! You won’t see these two easily. You’ll need the revelation of the Spirit to grasp what I’m saying. You don’t see what I’m saying.”

These are revolutionary ideas. That’s why He isolates these two. Again, He could have easily added ten or twelve more points that are important in our quest to walk in total victory over immorality. But He gives particular prominence to these two, and many times we don’t even think of these two in our desire to walk in liberty.

WHEN YOU LOOK TO LUST, IT'S ALREADY WORKING IN YOU

Here's the first one. Verse 28. He says, "When you look to lust, it's already working in you" (Mt. 5:28, paraphrased). In other words, "Immorality is already powerfully working in you now. Long before the physical act, it's already pervasive and dangerous. Deal with it now. You have a disease you haven't diagnosed, and I'm tipping you off because I love you."

They're thinking, "Oh, that's interesting."

He says, "You're already entrenched in it. It's already defiling you, but you're not addressing it because you don't think you have a problem." He says, "I'm shining the light on the pervasive problem already working in you. It's damaging you. It's defiling you. It's hurting you now." This is one of the keys to addressing having a vibrant spirit in God. The good news is, this is a treatable sickness, but you have to know it and you have to treat it. It's doable.

But not only that: not only is it working in you now, not only is it pervasive and treatable, but the eye gate is the key. Because the Pharisees are putting all their attention on avoiding the physical act of adultery. He says, "The eye gate is the key. It's how the spirit of immorality grows in you, but not only that: it's the place where you begin to overcome it. You overcome immorality by addressing the eye gate."

Now that's not really the place where we begin. We begin back in the Beatitudes: the pure in heart see God by encountering God and having a vibrant spirit.

YOU HAVE TO MAKE RADICAL CHOICES TO DENY YOUR CARNAL APPETITES

Now the second main point He's making is in verses 29-30. He says, "Now that you know you have a problem and that the eye gate is the key, you have to deal with it in a radical way. You can't be passive about it. It won't go away on its own. You won't just wake up one day and find that that aggressive spiritual cancer has just disappeared. It doesn't happen that way. You have to be radical. You have to make radical choices that will involve things that are precious to you—plucking out the right eye, cutting off the right hand."

And again, He doesn't mean physical mutilation of your body. He means, "No matter how dear it is to you, make the radical choice now, because it won't go away on its own."

JESUS UNDERSTANDS HELL BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE

Then He links getting free from immorality to eternal judgment. Now no one does that. I mean, that's so old-fashioned today in our culture, to link being motivated to obey to eternal judgment. That went out of style some years ago, but it didn't with Jesus. Now He doesn't only link it to eternal judgment, but neither is He shy about it. He's bold about it. Actually, Jesus preached more on hell than anyone else. Jesus understood hell more than anyone else because He created it Himself. He's linking the motivation to walk free with our eternal destiny in a negative sense.

Now again, already in the Beatitudes He gave us the big picture: first the positive, that we could be blessed and have a vibrant spirit we could see God. "Blessed are those who see God" (Mt. 5:8, paraphrased). To see God means to experience Him, to feel His presence. He's already given us that primary motivation.

Paragraph C. So in other words, Jesus is teaching how immorality grows through the eye gate, how it's overcome through the eye gate, and also how dangerous it is if it's left to itself.

Now the issue of walking free from immorality is not a preference issue. Some ministries say, "Well, we don't really address the negative stuff. We like to keep it positive; we like to keep it focused on the love of God."

Beloved, this is a "love of God" issue. This is about loyal love to Jesus. This is about having the capacity in our spirit to experience Jesus in a greater way. This is about loyal love to people whom we might be touching. The whole subject is the subject of love. It's not just that eternal hell is the only motivation, but it is part of the motivation that He gives.

Now the spirit of immorality has many different expressions. It's like an aggressive spiritual cancer, meaning it won't go away by itself. It will grow if left to itself. That's what Jesus is pointing out, because the Pharisees didn't even think they had a problem with it, and it was pervasive in their lives. It was hurting them and they didn't even know it. I mean, it's horrible to have a disease and to not know you have it, and it's treatable if you only knew it.

WHAT IS SEXUAL IMMORALITY?

Now, paragraph D. The big debate is, "What is immorality?" Immorality includes all sexual activity outside the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman. Now I put about twenty Bible verses together to come up with that definition. I'll say it again. Immorality includes all sexual activity, whether physical—touching someone in a sexual way; verbal—talking sexually in an inappropriate way; or even in the realm of technology, which is so common today. It's sexual activity in these ways outside of a covenant of marriage between one man and one woman.

Now young people ask, and I understand it, "How far can we go?"

You can't go anywhere sexually until you're married. Zero.

"Oh, really? Why? That sounds a little rigid, a little strict."

No, because of love, because Jesus wants us to experience Him, to walk in loyal love to Him and to love our partner in the highest way we can.

Young couples tell me, "Well, we're going to be married anyway."

I say, "Why would you take the last few months before you make that covenant and live defiled? Why not go to your marriage day with a bright spirit? Why go to your marriage day with this behind you for the last few months?" I mean, if you're involved in that, repent of it and decide that you're going to obey the Lord's leadership, and then on the wedding day have a bright spirit when you make that covenant together.

DON'T GIVE SATAN THE LEGAL RIGHT TO OPPRESS AND DAMAGE YOUR LIFE

Now why is Jesus so adamant about this point of immorality? Not because He has some rigid religious standard of strictness; but because He's zealous for love. Because He loves so well and He understands love so well. He knows this: that if we're involved in immorality, we're giving Satan the legal right to oppress and damage our

life. It's like Satan is at the door of the house, pounding at the door, trying to get in. But he can't make entry in a number of ways unless we unlock the door and invite him in.

Jesus is saying, "If you walk in immorality, though you can get a bunch of people to back you up and say it's OK, you're giving the key to the one who will torment you. Why do that even a little? Keep him out! He will oppress and damage your heart. He will injure your ability to experience God."

So there's no angry tone in this. There's no railing against sin. There's no condemnation, but there is a tender beckoning to enter into the highest and the fullness of what God has. Again, already in the eight Beatitudes He has shown us how to live blessed or exhilarated in our spirit before God.

MAKE A LIFELONG COMMITMENT TO THE HEART OF YOUR BELOVED

Paragraph G. Now the Lord sets all sexual expression within the covenant of marriage. It's a very important point. He puts sexual expression in the covenant of marriage for a very important point. He knows this. He knows this in a way we don't know it. We sort of know it, but He really knows it. He knows that the only place that sexual activity will enrich your life is in the context of a lifelong covenant.

Now let me just talk to the guys; it goes both ways, but just for time's sake I'll address the guys. But gals, know that all these principles go the other way, too. So a guy is in love with this girl and really likes her; she's so cute, and he says, "You know, I just love her and I want to go forward in sexual ways."

The Scriptures say, "No, not until you've made a lifelong covenant to her life story." I mean, you'll engage with her story in the past, the good and the bad, and her story in the future: her pains, her weaknesses, her strengths, her victories, her joys. The things about her life in the decades to come that are exciting, the things that are boring; the things you understand, the things you don't understand. He says, "Only in a context of that kind of commitment will sexual activity enrich you." You need that covenant for longevity, where you willingly participate in her story in all of its facets, both good and bad—in her family, her dreams, her fears—I mean, you get the whole package! In that context, sexual activity will enrich you; but outside of that context, it will injure you and it will injure her in ways you can't even perceive.

Now a lot of guys say, "Man, I really love her. But I'm not interested in a fifty-year commitment to hearing her story and figuring all that out. It just sounds ugh! She's cute and I think we could have a fun summer together."

The Lord says, "Don't dare. It will defile your spirit and hers. It will dull and injure your heart though you don't even know it." It will injure hers.

YOU CAN'T TOUCH LUST WITHOUT IT INCREASING IN YOU

Look what I've written here in paragraph G: it will increase lust in you. You can't touch lust without it increasing in you unless you repent of it; then it can decrease. It's interesting that when David committed adultery, the prophet Nathan came to him in 2 Samuel 12 and said, "David, yes you committed adultery. You sinned against your family. You sinned against her and her family, but what you don't know is that the Lord says you despised the Lord in throwing off His leadership in that adultery" (2 Sam. 12:10).

A lot of folks don't think about the fact that they're despising the Lord in sinning against the person that they love but with whom they haven't made a lifelong covenant.

THE PERVERSION INDUSTRY IS REACHING NEW HEIGHTS OF IMMORALITY

Top of page two. Well, let's look at these two principles again. Now again, these are a red alert! They're not the whole story of how to get victorious, but Jesus says you need revelation from the Spirit on these two because you won't naturally understand them yourself. The number one principle is that the spirit of immorality is already working in you if you look in lust. It's a pervasive problem already damaging you now. So red alert, red alert, emergency! Let's take this at emergency level and not be casual about it.

He explained that the gate of the eye is the place where immorality grows and is fueled. On the bright side, the eye gate is one of the places where immorality is cut off and diminished if we make a covenant with our eyes.

Now He's talking about looking at a person in person and lusting after them. That's how they would have understood it then, in that day, but in today's day with technology and media what's far more troublesome is what's happening in the media. We know that one of the adversary's main strategies is to use the media to fill the earth with perversion. I mean, imagine how much immorality has increased in the last ten to twenty years. Where will it be in another twenty years? I can't imagine how much the "perversion industry" will be financing much of the technology in new and innovative ways. The new increases in technology aren't all coming from the perversion industry, but many of them are. Where will holograms be in the realm of sexual perversion in twenty and thirty years? I can't even fathom whatever other things they come up with. My point is, it's not just a pervasive problem inside of people. Our culture is going to be completely inundated. This isn't a subject to wait a few years to get serious about.

THREE STAGES IN THE PROGRESSION OF ADULTERY

Well, Jesus taught here in verse 28 that adultery moves in three stages. It begins with eye adultery; then it grows to heart adultery, or the imagination—sexual fantasies. Then it moves on to physical adultery.

Now the Pharisees didn't appreciate this, because they thought they could obey the seventh of the Ten Commandments, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Ex. 20:14, KJV), by just physically avoiding women. Then they would have no sickness to address.

Jesus said, "Wrong! You have a problem now, and I love you so much that I'm pointing it out." Beloved, it's a lot easier to correct sin at the eye gate than it is to put out the raging fires of growing immoral passions.

Now Job 31 says it so clearly. Job says, "I have made a covenant with my eyes" (Job 31:1). We'll end with this in a few moments, and we'll make or re-establish a covenant with our eyes. He said, "I will not look on anything that stirs up lust in my heart" (Job 31:1b, paraphrased). Beloved, this is a covenant that will greatly enrich our spiritual life. This is what Jesus is saying in verse 28. He says, "You have a pervasive problem that's already working in you long before you touch anyone—but you can correct it! It's treatable if you put a focus and attention on the eye gate. Don't ignore the eye gate and expect this cancer to go away on its own, this spiritual cancer."

David affirmed the same truth in Psalm 101:2-3. He said, "I will walk within my house with a perfect heart, and I will set nothing wicked before my eyes" (Ps. 101:2-3). Now this is a big statement. He says, "I will walk within my house." Now our house is the place where we have most familiarity and most privacy. And because our guard is down, our house is typically where we're the most selfish, the most carnal, the laziest, the most

unguarded. That's where we can say the most degrading things and our anger can express itself. Again, out in public everything is respectful, and we're going strong, and we're obedient, godly men.

But David said, "In my house where no one can see me, where I'm most unguarded and most familiar, I will set nothing wicked before my eyes—nothing. Lord, I commit to You." This is a commitment he's making to God.

"IF YOUR EYE CAUSES YOU TO SIN, PLUCK IT OUT AND CAST IT FROM YOU"

Principle number two. Jesus is talking about how to deal with lust. He says, "Now that you've decided how important the eye gate is, you know you have a problem that's already growing and working within you." The eye gate isn't the whole issue, but it is key. He says, "Now let's take it up a notch. Principle number two. Now you have to make radical decisions to alter situations in your life in order to remove things that are inflaming lust in you." He ties it together and He says, "And you make these radical decisions knowing that lust won't go away by itself. But you make them in the knowledge that there's certain judgment coming for people who cast off God's way in this realm of morality."

Now this is a pretty intense approach. In verse 29 Jesus says, "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you." That's better than going to hell. Verse 30: "If your right hand causes you to sin, cast it off. Cut it off and cast it from you." It's better than going to hell. Again, it's not popular to tie motivation to obedience to going to hell, because "that's just not how people are motivated!"

Jesus says, "You're wrong. That's part of the motivation. It's not the whole motivation, but I know how the human heart works and it's true. They'll go to hell. It's real. It's not a tactic. That's really where they'll go if they disregard Me in this area."

"Lord, that's pretty intense."

Now the eye and the hand are symbols of that which is most precious and most useful in a person's life. Let's take the eye for a moment. The eye speaks of that which is dearest and most precious to your life. I mean, if someone had the option to lose one of the faculties of their body, their eye would be one of the last ones they would lose. It's very, very dear, very cherished, and that's the point. Well, in the ancient world, like today in many places as well, the hand was the symbol of the workforce. The hand was where people made their money. So the hand relates to that to which increases economics. He says, "I want you to understand that if it comes to removing something precious—I'm not talking about your physical eye but something as precious as your eye." There aren't many other things that are that precious. He says, "If it comes to that, then move it. Move that person out of your life. Get out of that adulterous situation."

"Well, I work at a place and they're really into that stuff..."

He says, "Cut your right hand off, even if you lose economic advantage." Lose it. Because you have to understand that your eternal destiny is far more important than that precious relationship or that well-paying job or anything else that's near and dear to you.

The man says, "But I love her. She means everything to me."

I say, "Does she mean your eternal destiny to you?"

“Umm, well... what about grace?!” We just cast off God’s leadership and claim grace later. You know, that’s a dangerous, non-biblical approach to sinning.

I said, “You can’t have His leadership over your life and the adulterous relationship. Break it.”

“Well, that would be like losing my eye.” That’s the point. He said exactly what Jesus was saying here.

JESUS TAUGHT MORE ON HELL THAN ANYONE ELSE IN THE BIBLE

Well, lets go to paragraph E. Now many in the Church have a low view of hell, but Jesus does not. Again, He created it. He taught more on hell than anyone else. I’m talking about unrepentant, immoral people. That’s the key. Because you can stumble in immorality, but if you call it sin and declare war on it, the Lord will be with you in your sincerity every step of the way, because you won’t get free from the practices in one moment. I mean, that happens occasionally, but ordinarily the freedom comes over time. You can enjoy the Lord even while you’re walking on the way to freedom—even though you’re stumbling, because you’re declaring war on it and calling it sin. In other words, you have an honest, sincere heart, and the Lord says, “I can enjoy My relationship with you and I can help you in that context.”

PEOPLE GO TO HELL BECAUSE THEY REFUSE THE LEADERSHIP OF JESUS

So my point is, don’t approach this and say, “Oh no, this is either all or nothing!” No, repent of it and continue to work through it, even though you’re struggling, but you’re warring against it each step of the way. A lot of people who are in the church world are very lackadaisical about immorality. They say, “No, I’m not going to repent of it. That other church says it’s OK!”

That view is disastrous. People really will go to hell for denying Jesus’ leadership in this area of their life. They don’t go to hell because of immorality. They go to hell because they refuse Jesus’ leadership. Because we believe it, we speak out boldly—tenderly but boldly; not with a harsh tone, because we love. We’re fighting for love. This is a message about love.

You know, I’ve used the same analogy over the years of the doctor, and the lady visits his office and gets a checkup, and she has an aggressive cancer. It’s growing fast, but it’s treatable if she takes instant, immediate measures. It’s aggressive. We’re talking about making radical decisions. The doctor says, “You can treat it. But you have to act now, and you have to act radically.”

Well, the diagnosis is cancer and it’s growing fast, but he says, “I know her. I want to stay positive. We’re friends. I want to affirm her.”

So he comes back and gives her the report. She says, “How am I?”

“Well, you’re OK. I want to keep this positive and upbeat. I want you to feel affirmed. I want you to invite me to the barbeque next week. Everything is fine.”

The lady dies of cancer. Now that’s not love. Of course that doctor would be charged with malpractice, but beloved, by that same distorted, non-biblical, perverse definition of love, we’re operating in malpractice as

citizens of the kingdom of God. We can't redefine love on our terms and affirm immorality because we value the person.

See, there's a really manipulative rhetoric out in the culture today. It's called *tolerance*. People use that word to mean several different things. There's a very manipulative way that the word *tolerance* is used. The word *tolerance* means we value the individual and we see their dignity. That's awesome. So we tolerate the fact that they have different views because we value them. That's excellent. But that's not the same thing as agreeing with their destructive behavior. See, they have different views, but we value them and we celebrate their humanity, but we love them so much we're going to address the destructive behavior when it's appropriate to address it. So we don't have to choose between valuing them and being straightforward. We can do both, but in the right time in a tone of love.

SEXUALLY IMMORAL PEOPLE WILL NOT INHERIT THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Well, look at what the Bible says here in 1 Corinthians 6. It's very clear about judgment. It says, "Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9-10)—not if they don't repent. If they repent, they fully receive the kingdom for free. If they don't repent, they will not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Now people say, "Yeah, so I get the sodomites and the homosexuals and adulterers, but what is this fornicator thing? Who are they?"

That's the single people in the church world. There's no covenant of marriage they're violating, but they're involving their lives in immorality, sexual immorality and they're not repenting of it. "Well, we're single, we're not married; we're claiming grace."

He says, "I want you to know this. That group of people, if they don't repent, no matter how much they hang out in the church world, are not in the kingdom." That's not a very popular message, but he warned them, "Don't be deceived about this. There's a lot of popular sentiment out there, but they're lying to you; they're not giving you the truth."

Ephesians 5 says the same thing. He's writing this to the Ephesians. He says, "When I was with you, I made this crystal clear. No fornicator has any inheritance in the kingdom" (Eph. 5:5, paraphrased). No! Not one of them. Again, the fornicators are the single people who aren't violating any marriage covenant. In adultery, at least one of the people is married and the covenant is being violated. He says, "Don't let anyone deceive you with their empty words. They're just empty words. It's not the faithful, true witness of the Bible, of God's heart." He says, "The wrath of God comes on these people" (v. 6, paraphrased). He says, "If you love them, be straightforward."

"Well," says the young man, "no one in the church I grew up with addressed this." Well, you've been in deception. The key to being in deception for years is not to stay in it; it's to get out of it.

"Well, where I came from, it doesn't make any difference."

What we care about is God who loves us so much that He's fighting for our ability to walk in love towards Him, to walk, to receive love from Him and walk in love toward the person we're touching.

THE FLAME OF DESIRE WILL BECOME AN INFERNO IF LEFT UNCHECKED

Paragraph A. Top of page three. The danger of lust is that it grows. It's a big danger. It's unbiased. Lust doesn't care who you are. The most dignified person, the most intelligent, triple PhD at Harvard, head of the space department, world banking system, the most powerful personality with the strongest mind, lusts will hold them captive with no bias. It doesn't matter what position or what kind of personality they have, lust has a power of its own that's bigger than they are.

Paragraph D. Immorality is so dangerous because it grows. It becomes uncontrollable.

Now younger people don't think that's true. They're so young, they haven't yet experienced how uncontrollable it is; they may have seen it here and there, but they think to themselves, "I'll dabble with immorality in my twenties. Boys will be boys. I'll sow my wild oats." We make light of it. "Then when I'm in my thirties, I'll control it."

It doesn't work that way. It doesn't work that way. "I'll take a little injection of a really aggressive type of cancer, and then in a few years we'll get rid of the cancer!" No, that doesn't make any physical sense. But it's the same logic.

Here's what they don't know. Here's what they don't know. Lust is more powerful and more dangerous and it grows faster than they know. They have no idea what they're touching. They're just having a good time. You know, they're in their college years; they're in their twenties. They haven't yet put together the power of the combination of these four things. Let me tell you these four things. Number one: their heart gets colder. So they're in their twenties; now they're in their thirties, but their heart is colder than it was in their twenties. Their mind is darker. They have more perversion in their memory. They weren't counting on that. They just thought the perversion would go away. It doesn't. It's actually got a bigger stronghold. Their conscious is hardened; it's defiled; it's not as responsive as in their twenties. They have more demonic activity in their life.

The man says, "Man, I thought I would just play around in my twenties, and then in my thirties I would get serious, have a family, and be a man of God. But it's harder! My heart isn't moving. I thought it would just move on its own." Their heart is colder, their mind is more perverse, their conscious is more defiled, and they have more demonic activity. Then when they're in their forties it's worse than in their thirties. Then in their fifties it's worse than their forties. It keeps getting worse.

You need to repent and make radical decisions: cut off the eye and then the hand. I mean, remove the most cherished and even the most costly financially situations, no matter what the cost. Be radical, and be sure of this, if you don't come under His leadership, no matter what they told you in your Sunday school class, you'll end up in the lake of fire. You really will.

Someone says, "Well, I thought if I prayed the sinner's prayer, I would be OK."

No. They told you a lie. This is real.

The man says, "Wow. This is pretty intense! I'm in my thirties, and my heart isn't moving towards God like I thought it would."

Well, you're in lot worse condition on the inside. Your forties will be worse. You know, we invite demons into our life by our activities. They can't get in unless we open the door. This sounds cute, but demons are expensive. I mean, you have to pay money to do some of these things to get those demons. Then you have to feed your pet demon for years because you have costly habits now. Then you get tired of it and it costs a lot of money to get rid of those demons. I mean, the whole thing is expensive. It costs you a lot of money, a lot of time, and a lot of relationships. Demons are destructive. A lot of people in this room can pick up a lot of demons in their twenties, casually claiming the grace of God in a false way.

FLEE IMMORALITY LIKE YOUR LIFE IS IN THE BALANCE

Paragraph C. This is a very important passage. Paul urges us to flee sexual immorality (1 Cor. 6:18). Flee immorality like your life is in the balance. Imagine that you're in a park and you look across the way and a wild lion escaped from the zoo. There it is chasing you. Paul says to flee it like a lion is coming after you, because in 1 Peter 5:8, the devil is compared to a devouring lion. That lion is aggressive. But you're thinking, "Well, I think I'll just chill out and finish my lunch. Maybe when he comes I'll invite him to participate."

He will have you for lunch! He's wild. He has no reasoning and no mercy. He will destroy you. You had better flee. People don't flee immorality. They kind of avoid it occasionally. He says, "Don't avoid it; run for your life from immorality."

Then he gives the reason, and it's an unusual reason. Or it's a reason that surprises us at first. He says, "Let me tell you why you had better run for your life." It goes beyond just avoiding that one party: I mean, turn off the Internet, don't speak to women in sexual ways, don't touch them, don't go see the movies. Flee this thing like you're running for your life, because this lion is truly chasing you. It's not a game. He says, "Let me tell you why. Every sin that a man does is outside of his body" (1 Cor. 6:18b, paraphrased). When he steals money, that's outside of his body. But a man who commits adultery sins against his own body.

That's an unusual concept. "What do you mean he sins against his body?" That's the only sin whereby we sin against our body. Or it's the only one that Paul identifies, is probably a more accurate way to say it.

GOD WILL GIVE THEM UP TO UNCLEANNESS IN THE LUSTS OF THEIR HEARTS

Well, in paragraph D, we understand a little. In Romans 1 Paul elaborates: he develops what he means by sinning against your own body by immorality. Now look at verses 24-28: this is a very sobering, even kind of terrifying passage.

Verse 24. "God . . . gave them up to uncleanness" (Rom. 1:24). Now you'll notice three times it says God gave them up. He's giving them up in a greater measure, in a greater way. He's giving them up to greater perversion. Now first He gives them up and says, "Are you going to repent?"

They say, "No."

Then He gives them up in a greater sphere of perversion. "Are you repenting?"

"No."

Then He gives them up to a final sphere of perversion. And so follow this. It's talking about immorality here. He says God gave them up to their uncleanness. They wouldn't repent of it. Again, in our church world we have Bible verses to back up the grace of God where it's OK to do it. God will give a person up to their uncleanness in the lust of their hearts and they'll continue to dishonor their body. That's like a terrifying concept.

This passage explicitly lays out the process. If they repent they'll be totally forgiven, and they begin to experience deliverance. Fantastic! If they don't, we're talking about the negative here. This works for guys or gals, old or young. He says, "God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men" (Rom. 1:26-27). It's talking about homosexuality. He says, "Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due" (Rom. 1:27).

Here's the point that I want to highlight; Paul is saying they receive in their body, in themselves, in their body and their soul, a penalty that's working. The penalty increases if they don't repent. Oh, this is terrifying! This is what Paul means when he says they sin against their body. He says they open the door for a penalty to begin to operate inside of their body and inside of their soul and their spirit. Then, if they still don't repent, it gets worse and worse. Verse 28: God will give them over to a debased mind; a depraved mind. So let's look at number one underneath.

GOD WILL LIFT THE NATURAL RESTRAINTS THAT PROTECT US FROM PERVERSION

Now what does it mean for God to give them up, to give them over? It means that He lifts the natural restraints with which He designed the human frame. Every single person, believer and unbeliever, has natural restraints built in us that repel perversion at the beginning. Something in us says, "Uhh, I don't think this is right." When we're really young and someone touches us, we say, "No, this doesn't seem right." There's a natural restraint.

But we don't have the power to obey that restraint in the full sense, so we cry out to God for salvation. That's part of our journey to the Lord. If we yield ourselves to it, the Lord says, "I will lift the restraint in a greater measure. They'll go from uncleanness to vile passion; if they don't yield and repent, I'll give them a depraved mind."

Now God isn't giving them the depraved mind; I said it wrong. Really, He's just letting them have what they chose. That's the penalty. It's not that He's doing something to them; He's simply lifting the restraint and saying, "You want lust? You can have more of it, but you'll have it in a measure that you don't understand and you won't like. You want lust and you don't want My leadership? Here, take the lust."

So they're released at one level and some people repent. Others say, "Oh, I can't get satisfaction. I have to have more."

He says, "You had better back off of this." Then He releases them and gives them over. He lifts the restraint at a greater measure.

Finally, it's a debased mind. I mean, the most terrifying measure. Now there's a very important verse that describes this. I just want to give it to you. It's not on the notes. It's 2 Peter 2:19, describing false teachers who teach the Bible. They promise you liberty in the realm of morality. 2 Peter 2:19. They promise liberty in sexual

experience. They think they'll be satisfied and find liberty. People say, "I want liberty in my sexuality," but they end up in bondage with cravings they can never satisfy. The cravings get deeper, darker, more perverse, and less satisfying the more they go on. They're looking for liberty and satisfaction. They get bondage and unsatisfiable cravings that never, ever stop. That's what they get. Well, so much for the liberty message, because that's what they want.

Our nation is crying out for sexual liberty. They'll walk straight into horrific bondage with cravings that will be deeper and darker and less and less satisfying the further they get from God. Oh, it's terrifying!

Paragraph three: when they're finally given over to a debased mind, all the restraints are lifted. They're in total bondage. Literally, they can't go for two minutes without thinking perverse thoughts. They could be the leader of a great financial empire, but even in the midst of their business meetings there are immoral thoughts in their mind. They're depraved. They think it's liberty. They have no satisfaction. They're pushing new boundaries and getting more demons.

THE DANGER OF LUST IS THAT GOD JUDGES IT EVEN IN THIS AGE

Top of page four. Now I'll bring this to an end and let you read page four on your own, but I'll just mention a point or two. The danger of lust is that God judges it even in this age. I've already talked about how He judges it eternally. He judges it now as well, but here's the good news: that's a love message. You can read these verses on your own. This is Jesus, here in Revelation 2, paragraph A. This is Jesus talking about His commitment to judge His people. He's talking about Jesus judging Christians. Why is He judging them? Because of love. He says, "I will wake them up. I'm not letting them go in this spiritual cancer without an intervention. I love them so much, I will remove their options and put them against a wall. I will ambush them and see if they'll say yes to me."

A lot of times they do and a lot of times they don't. He wants to stop the progression that's working in them, so He judges. Some people say, "Well, the God of the Old Testament judges, and Jesus, the God of the New Testament, does not." That's absolute biblical confusion. The God of the Old and the New Testament is identically the same God. He loves and judges in both Testaments and He only judges for the sake of love: to remove the things that hinder love.

So read those verses. I want to urge you to read them carefully, because you need to be equipped in these verses for yourself so that when some well-meaning, distorted believer comes along and tells you it's OK to live in immorality in the name of grace because everything is fine, you'll have a way to stand and say, "No, that's not what the Bible says."

"Well, our church says it's OK."

It doesn't matter what your church says. Jesus loves me and I love His leadership. I want you to be able to know these verses. If it's not even personal for you but it's someone to whom you're ministering, they may say, "Well, I heard that it's OK now. No one is preaching on sin anymore!"

You say, "Well, Jesus is." And then you can add, "And so am I!" Tell them, "I'm with Jesus," and then give them these verses. Then there's much more besides.

Roman numeral V. We have to operate in the opposite spirit of immorality, and progressively we get free.

Now we get forgiven instantaneously. We can have a first-class standing before God. I mean, the moment we repent we can stand with confidence, as a first-class citizen. I don't mean that the bondage is done; we're still stumbling, but we're warring against it, so we have integrity and sincerity in our relationship with Him. He smiles at us. He says, "I delight in you. Keep warring and I'm with you. Cry out to Me. Never, ever let go of the battle"; and I tell you there's an integrity and there's a sincerity in your relationship with Him even though you're in weakness. He can and He will help you.

“RECEIVE WITH MEEKNESS THE IMPLANTED WORD, WHICH IS ABLE TO SAVE”

Now here's just one verse I want to give you. James 1. I've used this verse a lot over the years. I love this one. James said, "Lay aside all filthiness . . . Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (Js. 1:21). Now he doesn't mean it's able to forgive you right now; it's able to heal your soul.

Now first we have to lay aside all filthiness. Some people hope that they'll go to bed one night and wake up without filthiness. Jesus won't decide this for you. You have to say no to immorality at the eyes, and when it requires the cutting off of the hand and the plucking of the eye, those cherished and even costly financial decisions, you'll make them. I mean the cherished and even costly financial decisions; you'll make them. You'll make them.

He says, "OK, you've laid aside filthiness. Now your heart is still raw. Your heart is still under the power of the sin, but you've made the choices so that now we're in the right position together." He says, "Receive the word implanted."

Now the word implanted is more than a Bible study. It's more than just hearing a Sunday morning sermon, taking some notes and talking about it with a friend afterwards. The word implanted means the word becomes personal. It's a part of your conversation with Jesus and the seed is growing. It takes time for it to grow as an implanted seed. But it's in you. It's not Bible information; it's part of your conversation with God.

Now I'll mention one little thing here at the end of paragraph A. Proverbs 5-7. Young men, old men read this. Some guy told me when I was around twenty years old to read Proverbs 5-7 everyday. I said, "OK..." I didn't even know what it was, and I read it, and it's the most descriptive three chapters. The entire passage isn't about adultery, but mostly it describes how costly adultery is. Proverbs tells us, "If you do this, if you go in this direction, you'll lose your money, you'll lose everything you've worked for. You will lose your job, your family, your reputation, your destiny. You'll lose your children. You will lose everything." It says it over and over like a hard-hitting hammer. I urge you read Proverbs 5-7 regularly. In my early days, in my twenties and thirties, I preached on these chapters: I told men to go for it, and I want to really stir people up to these chapters again.

Paragraph B. I won't go through B, but I just wanted you to know it's there, meaning the two principles Jesus addressed. This was not a comprehensive teaching on how to get free; these were simply two principles that are very necessary, and we need revelation on these principles. There are more principles than just these two. I just listed a few there.

Amen. Let's stand.

