

# Abstain from Sexual Immorality

by Paul Washer

Well, open up your Bibles to 1 Thessalonians 4. It seems like every time I preach, either you're getting farther away from me or I'm getting farther away from you. I don't know which it is. Let's look at chapter 4 verse 3, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality."

Let's go to the Lord in prayer. Father, thank You for Your Word; for its great encouragements and its great warnings. And I pray, dear God, that You would settle upon us, that You would make us solemn, serious, before this text. That You would put within us a fear of sin, a love for You, a desire for true piety, to be like Christ. And Lord, take the texts that are going to be read tonight and illumine the hearts of Your people, their minds, that they may see, Lord, the beauty of purity, and the grotesque nature of sin. Lord, that we might walk, as Paul says here, in a way that is pleasing unto You. Lord, help us with Your Spirit. Empower and guide, illuminate our minds to understand. Do a work among us, Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen.

In the last few sermons, we have been talking about 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8, and we haven't advanced very much. We've talked about several things in verse 1, about Paul exhorting and beseeching us to live in a manner that is pleasing to God. And that is our great task, and that is the goal of sanctification. In the end, it's that you and I please God in everything that we think and everything that we say, everything we do. That everything be brought in submission to His will. We also learned that we are to excel, that we're never to see our place in Christianity as if we have arrived, but that we are to continue to excel and excel; to want to do more, to want to be better, to strive to be more like Christ. And we explained that that should never create in your heart the idea that you do not measure up. Why? Because you're not striving to enter God's love, you are striving in the midst of God's love, in the context of a love that you already possess because of the perfect person and work of Jesus Christ.

Now verse 3, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification." We explained also here that your sanctification is not the totality of the will of God. There are many other things, many other aspects of the will of God, but sanctification is extremely important; and I would say, in one sense, a lack of sanctification shuts the door in your life to the rest of God's will. Whereas, taking sanctification seriously opens the door to so many other opportunities and blessings that are ours in Christ. And now we see in verse 3, "That is, that you abstain from sexual immorality."

Now I had intended to go from 3 to 8, and to deal with these texts in its entirety. But I think that it's best that we stop here for a little while, and we talk about something of which none of us want to speak. And that is the idea of sexual immorality, and of the need for purity, for the greatest purity in our lives. Now I want to say a few things here. First of all, in this text, 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12, we see this: We see sanctification being set before us as something that is absolutely necessary in our life. And then we see two expressions of sanctification. One is, abstaining from sexual immorality. Or, to say it in a positive light, purity. Sexual purity. And the other is love. These two things are two of the greatest manifestations that you truly are growing in Christ. And to not have these things is one of the greatest demonstrations that you are like a

new convert at best. That you have not attained to the place you ought to attain if there's a lack of love or sexual impurity in your life.

Now some people would look at this and say, "Sexual impurity, love, why these two things?" Well, not just because these two things are great expressions, but there's a very real sense in which these two things go together. Love, true love for God, true love for others, will lead to sexual purity. And sexual impurity is one of the greatest demonstrations of lovelessness, of self-love, of self-idolatry; and of lovelessness to God, and lovelessness to those around us. Now I know those are hard words, but they're true. And I can't back up from them.

Now, in this sermon what I'm going to do, instead of just breaking down this text, I'm going to take several texts throughout the Bible, because my desire, what I have prayed for, is that a holy fear would settle upon your life. And that you would see how horrifying this sin is. But before I do that let me say this: I don't want to give you one second of comfort. And so in order to take away all comfort from you, I'm going to say this: Sometimes I hear men, especially, use this excuse, "Well, all men struggle with sexual immorality." I want to take that away from you, that's not true. All men should FEAR sexual immorality. All men should constantly be aware of the dangers. But I want you to know, not every man struggles with this. You need to understand that, and not use it as a comfort for your own sin. Now again, that's very hard, but it's very true.

We all may struggle, we all struggle in certain areas. But don't think that because you struggle in a certain area, everyone else does. Because that's simply not true. And you don't want to give your flesh comfort in this. There is power over sexual immorality. There is power, regardless of how dangerous this sin is. And if you don't think it's dangerous, then I would suggest you talk to three people: The pastor, the policeman, and the lawyer. Because they will tell you that a great many crimes and dangers and horrible things that occur in this world flows out of this. It does. This is not some harmless sin. This is not just a viewpoint that we ought to live in absolute moral freedom. This KILLS. It destroys, more than any of us could ever know. And it doesn't just wreck the present generation. It wrecks generation after generation after generation.

So now, having said that, I want to give us just a small background on the terms that we often use. For example, sexual immorality, from where does that word come? What does it actually mean? It comes from the Greek word "porneia". Now I'm going to use a definition given by Louw and Nida, Greek scholars, and they say this: The word, porneia, means to engage in sexual immorality of any kind. Sexual immorality of any kind. So I want you to see, performing some unbiblical act with another person is no different than all the other expressions. That they are all wrapped up in wickedness. And you need to see that so that you don't slide, because in sexual immorality what you need to understand is it starts off sometimes very, very small. Just a glance. But then it slides into the very pit of Hell. It does.

Oftentimes I hear, "This man has fallen." Honestly, I've never seen a man fall. I've just seen men slide, by compromises, small compromises, that no one sees. So when we talk about sexual immorality, we are talking about porneia, we are talking about "to engage in ANY kind of sexual immorality". Often though, in the New Testament and in the Greek world, it is with the implication of prostitution. But it embarks the following things: Fornication, prostitution, pornography, homosexuality, and any other thought, or act, or concept, or belief, that would contradict the Word of God with regard to the physical.

Now let's look at the word "fornication". What does fornication mean? Well, its English definition has to do with, (because sometimes porneia is translated fornication,) it has to do with any sort of sexual activity outside the sacred bonds of marriage. Okay. Now the word, fornication, actually comes from the Latin "fornix". And you say, "Well, what does that mean?" Well, actually it means "vaulted ceiling". You say, "Well, how do the two things go together?" It eventually came to mean "brothel". Like the vaulted or chambered ceiling of a brothel.

Now what is "pornography"? Pornography comes from the Greek word "pornographos" - from porné, which means prostitute; and graphos, which means writing. And literally it refers to "writing about prostitutes" or "writing about exploits with prostitutes".

In our age, our visual age, it doesn't refer so much now (even though it does) to writings, as it does photography, video, and other kinds of media. But before we go on, let me say something. A great majority of novels that people read, even so called people in the church read, would properly be qualified as pornography. So just because there's no pictures doesn't mean you're not in sin. Very important.

Now, what I want to do now is, I want to go through several texts of the Bible and just make brief comments, because most of these texts stand on their own. And my hope is that the Holy Spirit will do what no man can do; and that is, set upon you heart, fear. Great fear for these things. First of all, Acts 15:19-20. It's talking about the Jerusalem Council. And what's going on there? The Gentiles have been converted; many of the Judaizers were going out, trying to turn them into Jews, put them back under the Law, demanding circumcision. But then the apostles and the leaders and the elders meet together in Jerusalem, and they make some decisions. Now what is the decision? They condemn sexual immorality, alongside of two other things — idolatry, and the consuming of blood.

Now I want you to think about that for just a moment before we read the text, because sometimes it's helpful to get a visual picture. These three things are set beside one another, so that you can say in some manner, at least to some degree, they are equal. Would you bow down before an idol of Baal? Well, you're committing an equal thing when you're involved in any form of sexual immorality. Would you consume blood as a Pagan? Well, you're on par with these types of things when you are involved with sexual immorality. It says, Acts 15:19-20, "Therefore it is my judgment that we not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols, and from fornication, and from what is strangled, and from blood."

I've always marveled at how light the Jerusalem Council seems to be. I mean, when you think about our day and age, and you think about we have the full counsel of God in the New Testament, and all the commands and all the prohibitions that are within the Scriptures; the letter going out to the Gentiles is what? "Abstain from idolatry, consuming blood, and sexual immorality." And basically, if you do these things, you'll be all right. Because, in a sense, from these things, at least from idolatry and sexual immorality, flow most other sins.

Now, look what he says in Acts 15:28, "For it seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials." The idea here is something essential or something necessary. Now when we think about essentials, what are we thinking about? The

most basic. Is that not true? The most basic requirements, the fundamental requirements. We could even say, Christianity 101. The beginning steps to develop a Christian morality. The baby steps. So if you're going to talk to a baby, you're going to say this, "Look, I'm going to give you right now, the essentials. This is essentially what you must do. That you abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication. If you keep yourselves free from such things," and here we see the apostles believed that was possible, didn't they? It is possible. It's more than possible, it's probable. It's commanded. It's required. It says, "If you keep yourselves free from these things, you will do well." And if you do not abstain from these things, if you do not gain freedom from these things, you will not do well. You simply will not.

Now I want to make just a point here that I think is very very important. Abstinence from sexual immorality is one of the most essential and basic aspects or requirements of the Christian life. Keeping yourself pure from sexual immorality is one of the most basic and essential things. If you have not mastered this, you have not even achieved, you have not even accomplished, you have not even arrived to the first rung of what it means to be a mature Christian. Now that sounds hard, but I want to lay that before you because I am so sick and tired of hearing men across the nation whine about the power of this; when I know God has given us power over it. And thinking it's almost an acceptable thing that you can have this, and still do Christianity. No! If you are doing this, you've not even made it to the first rung of Christianity. You're not even walking baby steps in Christianity. And I don't care how many books you've read, I don't care how much theology you know, and I don't care how much wisdom you think that you possess. You've touched nothing of maturity. This is extremely important to understand this.

Another point about it is this: Sexual immorality, its increased presence in society, is indication that it has been turned over to a depraved mind. Romans 1:24, "Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them." One of the things that we see from the book of Romans chapter 1 is we don't see men falling. We do not see societies falling. We see them sliding. Sliding. And if you notice that when it talks about a society given over to a depraved heart, the great emphasis there is not even war, necessarily. It's not even robbing. It's not even murdering. But what is the great indication? Sexual immorality. Sexual perversion.

Another thing that we see that is so very important is, it is a spiral. It is a spiral, and mixed company will not allow me to teach on this spiral. But I can assure you that some of the most twisted and perverted things that have entered into the mind of man began with something much simpler. Something not as heinous. But as a man gives himself to one thing, then he gives himself to another thing, then he gives himself to another thing, and another thing, and another thing, until his conscience is gone! This is true. This is why especially young men should guard their eyes, guard their eyes, guard their eyes, because it won't stay there! Once you've fed on a tiny thing, you'll want more, and then you'll want more. And then a thing that was very dark will no longer be dark enough. And then you have to go another dark thing, until finally you are consumed with darkness! You must understand that.

It's like when I worked with drug addicts in Peru, and even here in the United States when I was younger as a Christian, they would always say, "Your entire life as a drug addict is chasing that first high." That first high is so good and you spend the rest of your life chasing it again;

because no matter how much more you increase, it's not enough. And you just keep chasing, and chasing, and going deeper, until you are lost.

Now, another point that I want to make, and this is very important that we understand it: Believers are not to associate with any person who professes Christ but habitually practises sexual immorality of any type. Now that sounds very very hard. But listen to 1 Corinthians 5:11, "But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one." Now this is a reference to church discipline. And it is not teaching that any person who is struggling with sexual immorality, that they must be disciplined. That's not what it is saying. It is referring to someone who, in this struggle, has given themselves over to the struggle. They are not repentant, they don't care, and they just keep going on with it, even to the point of flaunting it. That that person should be brought into discipline.

And yet, if a person in the body who is not disciplined, because they truly show signs and fruit of conversion, but are struggling in a certain area, this area of sexual immorality, then here's a few things that I think we need to look at. First of all, as we've seen in the book of Acts, no matter what else they know, they're immature. No matter what else they think they know, they've not even reached the first rung of a Christian ethic being applied to their life. They should never be given a ministry in the church while they are struggling with this matter. They should never be set over any aspect of ministry within the church while they are struggling with this, for the same reason that a man should not be made an elder, who does not qualify according to Titus 1 or 1 Timothy 3.

Secondly, it is not recommended that this person who practises these things should counsel anyone regarding even the simplest matters of the Christian faith. Now I know again, that sounds hard, but look at what we're dealing with here. Would I tell a new believer to go out and counsel other believers? Absolutely not. Would I tell someone struggling with this particular sin, whatever aspect of it it is, "Yes, go out freely. Counsel people. Give your wisdom"? No! No! You should not give your wisdom. You should heal yourself, physician. You should take counsel, not give it. You should grow. You should take this thing and wrestle it until it is conquered. And conquered for a while, for a while.

Now, another point, those who habitually practise sexual immorality of any type will not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. This is what you need to understand. You know, we don't say these things anymore, do we? But the Bible most certainly does, and I'm going to read you several texts. Now again, we're not talking about a genuine believer struggling against this sin, learning to overcome, and eventually overcoming. But we're talking about someone who never makes headway, who never makes progress in this area, who is always enslaved to this for the rest of their life, and who finally give themselves up to it. This is what the Bible says, 1 Corinthians 6:9, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the Kingdom of God." They are called these things because they habitually practise them. They habitually practise them.

Galatians 5:21, "I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practise such

things - immorality and sensuality - will not inherit the Kingdom of God." Immorality and sensuality. I think it's something that I need to stop and point out here. One of the evidences that there are so many unconverted people in the church is that there's so much sensuality in the church. God is not against beauty. He's not against refinement. He's not against a person demonstrating, in their manner, their style, in their clothing, in their speech, even grace in the way they walk, God is not against such things. But sensuality? God hates it. He hates it. And there has been such a confusion between that which is beautiful (and I'm not just talking about women, I'm talking about men), and that which is sensual. We are to be, as limited as some of us are, we are to be a beautiful people, but never a sensual people. As an itinerant preacher, it's horrible that a man must be prayed up to go into some churches. It's wrong. It's wrong.

Also, Ephesians 5:5-6, "For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man (who is an idolater), has an inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." Look how many times Paul is warning us that it is a sure word, and we should not be deceived. "For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man (who is an idolater), has an inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and God." And then again, "Let no one deceive you with empty words."

You see, sanctification is a synergistic work. It is something that is done by God; it is something that we respond to. And yet, we have many great promises that He who began a good work in us will finish it. It doesn't mean that we'll all cross the finish line perfect. As a matter of fact, none of us will, until we reach that glorified state in Heaven. Yet the Bible does teach that all the days of a man's life, God will work in that man, if he's truly a believer. He'll bring him to sanctification, bring him to greater and greater Christlikeness.

Colossians 3:6, "For it is because of these things - immorality, etc. - that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience." These types of sins, sexual sins, are characteristic of the sons of disobedience, and God is justified when He comes against them in His wrath. Revelation 21:7-8, "He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God and he will be My people. But for the cowardly, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and immoral persons, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

Believers, many of them before they became believers, were in bondage to sexual immorality. But when they were converted, that bondage was broken. And, of course, that freedom had to work itself out. Sometimes, people were freed immediately and never had another problem. Other times, people are freed by the power of God, they're given a new nature; and yet, for sometime they will struggle against the ingrained habits of their flesh. But they will overcome!

I am coming to believe, more and more as I get older, that I am not so much on this earth to do great deeds of ministry. But I am on this earth to overcome the deficiencies in my character. I am here to overcome that which is lacking with regard to conformity to Jesus Christ. And I do believe that overcoming those things is absolutely essential. We're all so outward, outward, outward, aren't we? Got to do this and got to do that. Got to help these people. Got to fix them. Got to do all sorts of things. And constantly in my own heart, I'm hearing, "Physician, heal yourself!" That we are to look at the sins that beset us in our own life, and we are to attack

them as Phinehas attacked. To drive stakes straight through their heart.

I'm convinced, you be a holy man, you won't have to worry about anything else. God will use you. Even if you're dumb as a rock, He'll use you if you are a holy man, and woman. Revelation 22:14-15, "Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gate into the city." Now here we see entrance is through the blood of the Lamb. Yet in verse 15, "Outside are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the immoral persons, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practises lying." Again and again it seems like it's the same thing. They were never born again. They were never granted a new nature. They were never washed by the blood of the Lamb. They continued in their filthy practices. But that is NOT what a believer does. He does not continue in these things.

Another point, sexual immorality violates the purpose for which God made the body. Listen to what he says in 1 Corinthians 6:13, "Food is for the stomach, and the stomach for food." Yes, food is for the stomach. The stomach was made for food. It was not made for racket ball, or ice-skating, or even thinking. It wasn't made for running a marathon. The stomach was made for food. "But God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality," It was never created for that purpose at all. For what purpose then? "But for the Lord. And the Lord is for the body." To be involved in sexual immorality is to refuse the most glorious purpose for which your body was made, and to give yourself, give your body, to the most vile thing imaginable. You see, here we see something so different from Greek thought and from gnostic ideas; that the body was inherently evil, therefore it did not matter what you did with the body. My dear friend, that's not true. God made the body, and He made the body for Him. And to use it for some other purpose, especially sexual immorality, is to defile the thing that God has given you.

Also, sexual immorality is a horrible profanation of the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, the dwelling place of Christ. It is to profane God's temple. 1 Corinthians 6:15, "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I take away the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? May it never be." 1 Corinthians 6:19, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?" Let me illustrate this for you. Do you know that a priest not properly prepared, entering in to the Holy of Holies, that was a death sentence? You do know that, don't you? The most terrifying thing was once a year to go into the Holy of Holies; and everything had to be done exactly as the LORD desired. I mean, I'm not talking about you could get away with something in there. Everything had to be perfect!

Now I want you to think for a moment about sexual immorality, the temple - your body, and the Holy Spirit. And this is the illustration that I want to leave in your mind. Imagine a levitical priest practising sexual immorality with a pagan prostitute in the Holy of Holies. Can you imagine? No you can't. What would happen? I mean, that's unthinkable! It was unthinkable when at times idols were put in the Holy of Holies. Or to defile it, pig's blood was offered, or whatever. But think about this. This is what a man is doing. This is what a believer is doing. What a flagrant, arrogant, shameless way of dealing with the presence of Christ that dwells within us. Do you see how horrifying this is? And don't think it is just when the act is committed. Remember what sexual immorality is. It embarks all these things. Everything we've mentioned.

Sexual immorality is a denial of Christ's redemptive claim upon the body. 1 Corinthians 6:20,

"For you have been bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body." "No. No. I don't care at this moment if I've been bought with a price! I just don't care. I wanna do what I wanna do!" You say, "Brother Paul, you're saying this in such a ugly manner." It's an ugly thing. What do you want me to do, recite poetry to you? I pray that the Spirit of God would impress this upon all our hearts of how devastating, how horrifying, how vile, how twisted all of this is.

Sexual immorality is in a category all to its own. 1 Corinthians 6:18, "Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body." Now I want to be honest with you, the full understanding of what Paul is saying, I think, escapes us all. Because you read some of the finest, most consistent commentary writers, and you will see that they are all giving their ideas and inferences, but no one is really that sure. What is Paul saying? But I believe Calvin says something that really hits the heart of the matter. "Paul now shows how much we ought to abhor fornication. Setting before us the enormity of its wickedness and baseness, now he shows its greatness by comparison, that this sin alone of all sins, puts a brand of disgrace upon the body. Is it not enough to know that whatever makes it so, doesn't really matter? But this one thing we know for certain, that sexual immorality is in a category all to itself, with regard to vileness and harm."

Another thing about sexual immorality. God's displeasure against sexual immorality is revealed in that He killed 23,000 Israelites in one day for their immorality. 1 Corinthians 10:8, "Nor let us act immorally as some did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a one day." And what stopped the plague? Phinehas. One man with a lance. He takes it on, and he drives a stake right through its heart. Men and women, listen to me. I guess there was a time when these things should normally be just addressed to men, but it seems that women have become just as shameless as men. There's only one way to deal with sexual immorality. And that is: Drive a stake straight through it. Have no mercy upon it.

Sometimes I believe; as a matter of fact I know; we look at Israel going in to the land of Canaan, and they were told, "Have no mercy whatsoever on these pagan tribes that would lead you astray to another god. Have no mercy at all! Show no tenderness!" Now that was written for us. Not that we are to harm anyone in anyway, never. Because he's not talking about the people out there, they're not the problem. He's talking about the pagans in your own heart. That when you see ANYTHING, any pagan walking across trespassing your heart, any pagan thought, any pagan idea, to have no mercy. KILL IT! Grind it to powder! Drive a stake straight through its heart. Don't tolerate it. Be severe with yourself. Deal with it.

So many times, these types of things are taught, and everyone just gets together and hugs one another and sings "kumbaya." That is not what needs to be done here. You need to know, this is terrible! And you need to fight it with everything you've got, because the door to opportunity will be slammed shut until you do.

Sexual immorality also is humiliating to other members of Christ's body and a cause for great mourning among them. 2 Corinthians 12:21, "I am afraid - this is Paul - I am afraid that when I come again, my God may humiliate me before you, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality, and sensuality which they have practised." Now here is the Apostle Paul. He uses the phrase "I am afraid". He uses the phrase "humiliate me". He uses the phrase "mourning". Why? Because it's such a disgrace to the

people of God. You say, "No one knows what I'm doing." FOOL! Are you that foolish? No one knows what you're doing? The church is not just a spectacle to men, it is a spectacle to angels! They're supposed to see the grace of God and rejoice. And the fallen are to see the grace and power of God, and be humiliated. But when you practise immorality, when anyone practises immorality, the saints, the angels, mourn; and demons gloat. Demons gloat. Stop it!

Sexual immorality and sensuality are works of the flesh. It's obvious. Let's read it, Galatians 5:19, "Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practise such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God." To be a deed of the flesh, it says more than what we sometimes realize.

You see, one of the reasons why it is so important to know who you now are in Christ, not just positionally, but through the doctrine of regeneration; one of the reasons it's so important to understand what it means to be a new creature is that when some lie, like sexual immorality, is brought to you, when some temptation is set before you, if you believe that you are still some wretched fallen creature, you just shrug your shoulders and say, "Well, what else can I do?" But when when you realize that you are a new creature in Christ, you look at that and say, "It's a lie! That will not please me! That will not bring me joy! Once it reaches my lips, passes down my throat and reaches my gut, it will poison me at best. It will make me sick, nauseous, tear me to pieces. I am not that! You and I have nothing in common anymore. Away from me!"

I hear all these stupid preachers, saying, "Sin is fun." There's nothing fun about it. Nothing fun about it. Just one drop on the lips of a saint, there's nothing fun about it. It's not even fun for a season, don't buy into that lie. I'm so sick and tired of hearing that. Sin is fun for a season? Not for a saint! Not for a saint. Pour vomit down your throat, is that fun for a season? Because that's what sin is like to a believer. They hate it. You say, "Brother Paul, I've never seen you preach like this in the church." There's no sin like this! It needs to be dealt with this way. And again, men, stop being so just, just moping. Take this thing in the power of Christ, deal with it. Know that your soul depends on it. The life of your wife, the joy of your wife, depends on it. Your children depend on this. There's some things you can get wrong. You will do damage, but not that much damage. You get this wrong, [you'll do much damage]. It's a deed of the flesh, but you're not fleshly, you're Christian. You've been regenerated by the Holy Spirit. Walk in that. Recognize the lie. Recognize the lie.

Again, sexual immorality should not even be mentioned in the church, much less, practised. It should not even be mentioned. It's horrible that I have to, in one way, in one sense, almost defile you tonight by teaching on these things. It should not even be mentioned in the church. Ephesians 5:3, "But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints." You know there are some words that they just shouldn't try to transliterate. They just shouldn't try to. You know, you look at Devil, and Satan, and you think of a little guy in a red suit with pitchfork and horns, instead of seeing a slanderer and an accuser and an adversary. You think about saint, and you think about some bygone monastery man from Catholicism. The word means "holy one". You are a holy one. What business does someone like you have swimming in filth like this? You're holy. You're holy. You're holy.

There's something I want to say here, Ephesians 5:3, "But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among the saints." I think it's very important that immorality and greed are brought together here. You know, we so often do not remember what the Scriptures say that "greedy people will not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven". I want to just give you some notes here that I have written down. First of all, talking about impurity and greed: impurity is a physical lust; greed is a material lust. They have much in common. Both have to do with self-love. They do. Both sexual immorality and greed have to deal with self-love. And they both have to deal with lovelessness toward others. "I love me more than anyone else; therefore, I participate in sexual immorality, and I care little of what it means to God, and I care little about what it means to my brothers and sisters in Christ, or those who are even close to me in the family. I care little."

You say, "Oh, I'm weak." Just stop it! Stop it! Stop saying that! "Oh, I'm just weak." That's no excuse! And I will not let you make it an excuse. You're not weak, you're selfish. You're just putting yourself over the purposes of God, and over the purposes of the ones that you're supposed to love. Both have to do with selfishness. You say, "In what way, brother Paul?" Selfishly taking physical pleasure without giving any in return. That's what sexual immorality is. Whether it's looking at pornography - I take pleasure from this person, I give no pleasure in return. Sexual immorality where there is obviously no commitment - I take pleasure without committing anything to you. I take. I take. I do not give. And the whole purpose of intimacy between spouses is to attempt to outgive each other. Sexual immorality is just the opposite of that.

But look at it, it's just like greed. Taking material wealth without distributing it. Using it for self. Using it to promote. Using it to grow something of your own, and not thinking, "God gave me this to trust Him; to help others." You see, it's just the same. That's why they go together. It's just the same. Believers are to consider themselves to be dead to all forms of immorality. Colossians 3:5, "Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry." There we go again: immorality, greed, idolatry. Dead. Dead.

You know, so many people quote that text, Paul saying that, "I'm crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me." What does that mean? He is saying that, "When I look at the world, to me it's just like a dead, rotten corpse. And when the world looks at me, it sees the same. It doesn't want me, and I don't want it."

I saw this film one time, years ago, when I was a little boy. I don't know, it's one of those Twilight Zone or something films, in which this man was born, and you just saw him as an older man, and he was horribly deformed with these things coming out of his hair, and everything else. And he walked, everywhere he went he scared people. And he was ashamed and everything else. And then they take this man, and they put him in a rocket, and they're going to send him somewhere. You don't know where they're going to send him. Well, all of a sudden he arrives at this space station, and the capsule opens up and he gets out; and he's all ashamed. And then all of a sudden, he sees people all around him that are just like him. And then he hears two ladies that kinda have the same look he has, whisper to one another, "Mehn, he's cute." And then he sees this other guy who is a normal man, who is walking all ashamed, being put in the rocket to ship back to earth. Do you see what's going on? That's the way it ought to be, in a sense,

between us and the world.

When we look at the world: it's a rotten, seething, mass filthy flesh. We don't want it. And when it looks at us: "Fools. Fools. Following a Ghost. Men not worthy to be alive." There should be no interaction of compliment between us. Just consider yourself dead to it. Dead.

Sexual immorality is contrary to all sound teaching, even to the gospel itself. 1 Timothy 1:9, "Realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted." What is the gospel about? Purity. Love. What is immorality about? Filth. Selfishness. Self-love.

We're about to finish. Another point, sexual immorality makes one appear to be a citizen of Sodom and Gomorrah, rather than a citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem. Jude 7, "Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these, indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire." When a believer participates in any form of sexual immorality, even though hidden away, but not hidden from the sight of the spiritual realm, you can imagine the cackles and the laughter of the demonic, "Well, one of God's children looks like one of us. Looks like he's from our town, our lineage, our father." We don't want that. We shouldn't want that for the honor and glory of God.

Finally, Christ will judge sexual immorality in the church. Revelation 2:12-16, "To the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this: 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of immorality. Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth.'

We see this in the judgment of the church in Asia minor again in Revelation 2:18-23, "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this: 'I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds.'

When I hear about God moving among churches in America, when I hear about "the presence of God is surely in this place", I know in many cases it's nothing but fiction. A lie of the worst sort. Because if God was among His church, was with these places as He was, as they claim, in the book of Acts, the early part, then men would be dying everywhere. They'd be dying

everywhere.

Now, after hearing me preach for weeks, you may think that some sort of terror came upon me in the night. That's not the case. To talk about this, there's only one way to talk about it: Fiercely. And there's only one way to deal with it: Fiercely. And you need to take it to heart. Young men, old men, young ladies, elderly ladies; all need to take it to heart. Be very careful. It takes all sorts of forms. And know this, what was called pornography even thirty years ago is not called pornography today. Be very careful. Those areas that appear to be gray. "It's a great movie, it just had one act of immorality in it." What are you saying?

And for you youngsters, I've got a word for you, you need to understand. And I'm not seeing anything, if I did I would say it but I haven't seen it among you. But I have seen it in your generation and it terrifies me. I see young men and women who go to seminary, go to Bible college, or who just seem to love the Lord, read all kinds of books, the good ones. They read MacArthur and Sproul and Piper, and all sorts of men like that, talk about the Puritans, and then can switch right at that moment and talk about some film that in my generation, a lost person wouldn't go watch. Be very careful. Because I can tell you this: You want to truly know the power of God? I'm not talking about little stories, I'm not talking about just acting. You truly want to know the power of God? Then you have to make some serious decisions in your life.

"Legalism!" It has nothing to do with legalism! I don't even think about law when I walk on this earth. Do you know what I think about? There is a Person who dwells within me. And He's not referred to as a bull, or a rhino, or an elephant, although he is stronger, infinitely stronger than all of them. The Person who dwells in me is called the Holy Spirit, and He is referred to as a dove. Easily offended. Easily quenched. Be careful. This is not about keeping rules. This is about not offending the Person who dwells within you and within the church. So as individuals, and as a community, we must be pure. And don't walk out here pointing fingers, unless they're pointing straight at you. Don't do it. You've got enough to deal with, and so do I. Drink this down deeply. Think about it. Very solemn, not a very good sermon tonight, but absolutely necessary in this wicked dark age in which we live.

Let's pray. Father, I come before You in the name of Your Son. And I pray, dear God, O God, how fearful; make us fearful that which should be feared. Cause us to see, Lord, the need to be a pure people. A loving people. Help us see, Lord, that purity is one of the greatest expressions of love. Let us be a clean people, Lord; holy because Thou art holy. Lord, I don't ask for this congregation anything above being pure. In Jesus' name. Amen.

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