Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Abstaining from Sexual Sin, Part 1
Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:3
Code: 52-14

We return in our study this morning to Paul's letter to the church at Thessalonica. And I would encourage you to look with me at this wonderful passage in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. This morning we will embark upon an examination of verses 3 through 8. And the subject at hand is the matter of sexual immorality, sexual sin.

Through the years I have preached many, many times on 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 verses 3 through 8. In fact, years ago when I preached frequently to high-school students, college students, it seemed as though there was the continual need to speak on this subject. That need has not lessened, it has increased. But as often as I have preached on this passage elsewhere, I have never preached on this passage here, that being because we've never before studied 1 Thessalonians in the twenty0 plus years of ministry here. So I come to a familiar text to me, if not a familiar text to you.

And wanting to make it as poignant and direct as possible, I thought, "Well perhaps if I'm going to speak from the Word of God on this matter of sexual sin, I ought to establish the problem of sexual sin in our society and let the people know something of what is going on and then show how contrary to that the Word of God is." And so, I began to rummage through my files, looking up articles and newspaper clippings, reviews and various and sundry things that I have collected through the years regarding the sexual revolution. And it didn't take me long, in fact it was a relatively brief exercise in going through, to say to myself that having studied this great, lofty, glorious, magnificent, majestic passage, having come to grips with what it means and what it says and what level of purity God calls us to, to drag you all through the garbage of what is going on in our society would in my judgment be counterproductive. So I basically took most of that stuff and threw it in the waste basket, not particularly wanting even to be exposed to it again myself.

It should be patently obvious to all of us that we live in a sex-mad culture, that we live in a culture that is indulging itself in every conceivable and inconceivable sexual activity. In fact, it probably would tax your imagination and mine beyond its ability to conceive of a more sexually perverted or immoral society than the one in which we live. Not only is sexual sin tolerated in any form by any one with anyone else any time, any place, in any way, but more than just being tolerated it is advocated, it is promoted, it is marketed through every media means possible. For me to take your valuable time and

mine and to clutter your mind and mine with a cataloging or a chronicling of vices either by way of illustration or statistics would be to beg the point. It would be like taking ice to Eskimos. You really don't need that.

It is apparent that all of us have been living in a sexual revolution of sorts where it is not uncommon today to find people who call themselves Christians also engaging in every imaginable and unimaginable sexual vice. From what I hear from our pastoral staff, 75 percent of the Christian young people who come to our staff for premarital counseling have already engaged in sexual intercourse. That's in the church. That's in this church. It is apparent that we are living in a sexual revolution. I don't think any of us needs to be informed on that any more than we already are. We live in a culture where there are absolutely no standards or rules about that kind of behavior.

And the freedom of sexual expression is so demanded that it has become the god that in some ways is ruling over all the other gods in our culture. To put that into an illustrated form, we want to allow people sexual freedom at any cost even if it means they have to kill the product of that sexual union, right? Therefore the sexual fulfillment itself is more important than life. We want our sexual freedom even if it means murder of the victim of that freedom.

Looking over at the homosexual community, they want their freedom even if it means the whole population dies of AIDS. You see, we've come to the point where we so totally are consumed with sexual behavior that we literally live with unspeakable, unthinkable consequences.

I suppose in some sense, Hugh Hefner has been the guru from the start of this rampant, pornographic life-style. He's the one who really philosophically articulated it. Very early in his career as a panderer of vice, which he has done for all these years, he wrote these words, which I found quoted in a Christian magazine, by the way, just so you don't think I read his magazine. This is what he said, quote: "Sex is a function of the body, a drive which man shares with animals like eating, drinking, and sleeping. It is a physical demand that must be satisfied. If you don't satisfy it you will have all sorts of neuroses and repression psychoses. Sex is here to stay. Let's forget the prudery that makes us hide from it. Throw away those inhibitions, find a girl who is like-minded, and let yourself go," end quote.

Now that is the philosophy of the sexual revolution. There are several components to it. First of all, sex is simply an animal function. It's no different than eating, drinking or sleeping. Secondly, it is a physical demand that must be satisfied or you will wind up in a psychiatric office because if you don't satisfy it you're going to have all kinds of repressed problems. Thirdly, there are some prudes who

would want you not to do that, you've got to ignore them, find a girl who feels the same way, and do it.

Now we live in that society today. Its reduced itself to bumper stickers, "Do it in the dirt." “Do it here." And the innuendo of all of those kinds of things is sexual. The underlying philosophy of our time is of absolute, sexual freedom to express yourself in any way you want, any time with anyone under any circumstances. The extent of this is absolutely unimaginable and unthinkable.

We might ask ourselves, "Has there ever been a society worse than this?" May I be so bold as to answer the question by saying yes, yes. Hugh Hefner could have sold his same philosophy in Thessalonica. Hugh Hefner could have sold his same philosophy in Corinth. He could have sold it to Greek culture in the Roman world. And somebody with another name did, or somebodies with a lot of other names did, because in the Roman world at the time that Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians they...there was a sexual revolution which if anything surpasses the one we are now living through. They had experienced a sexual revolution which included homosexuality, which included pedophilia — sex with little boys, homosexual sex with little boys — which included effeminate transvestitism, men dressing up like women, which included every form of fornication and sexual perversion. It was true in the Roman world. And unlike today there wasn't any preliminary Christian culture to act as a sort of a small barrier along the way. Consequently they had their venereal epidemics as we do and all the rest of the things that are attendant upon a fornicating society.

Now the Greek language has an immense capacity to articulate because of the vastness of its vocabulary and the specificity of its words. So I pulled out a few of the Greek words that would help you get a feeling for the kind of culture to which Paul writes here. The Greek language is amply capable of cataloging all kinds of deviant sexual sins and there are varying words that make that very clear.

For example, this quick survey will help. And I'm only dealing with the heterosexual sins at this point. The first word to look at is *porn*. *Porn* literally means the purchasable one, the purchasable one, the one you buy, the harlot, the whore, the prostitute. They had that word because they had that. In the society in which Paul lived and to which he penned this letter and in which he founded churches under the power of the Holy Spirit, there was prostitution. It was apparently legal, rampant.

I just had the experience of, a few weeks ago, being in the city of Amsterdam. When we first arrived in Amsterdam we were taken to a little village called Marken, outside of Amsterdam in Holland. Holland is a fascinating country. Sixty percent of it reclaimed from the sea and so you have all these dikes all over the place. And we were driving along one of these dikes and we came to the little

village of Marken, quaint, cute little fishing village built right on the Baltic Sea...or the North Sea. All the buildings painted green and all of them with red trim, this cute little village. And someone said to me, "This is a Calvinistic village. Everybody here is a Calvinist." They still dress in their ancient costume. A man came clonking along the cobblestones with wooden shoes, black stockings and little puffy pants and a funny little shirt and a hat on his head. And a lady came along with a sort of an apron with all that Dutch trapping all over it. These are very serious people. In fact, we were told that they would be very serious in demeanor, very serious in attitude because they're all Calvinists and the guide said everybody knows that Calvinists are very sad and miserable people.

And that had been a great part of the influence of Dutch past, very religious. We then went in to Amsterdam to find an absolutely opposite culture. Went in to the city square of Amsterdam, there are about three or four thousand teen agers and college kids milling around the city square, drinking beer, consuming alcoholic beverages, taking cocaine, smoking marijuana and all of that. Why were they gathered there? Because adjacent to the city square in the beautiful city of Amsterdam is the red-light district where prostitution is legalized and subsidized by the government. The red-light district where literally there are red lights all over the place and women hanging out the windows plying their trade to people passing along the streets. It has become the mecca of young people in Europe because free sex reigns there.

Well they had that same kind... And by the way, it was an appalling experience, an experience that makes you want to do one thing and that's leave and get out. They had that in Thessalonica. They had a sort of a free sex mentality because prostitution was legal. Women could be bought.

A second word to keep in mind in the Greek language is a form of the first word, *pernmi*, and it sums up the filthy business of making a living by prostitution. It encompasses the prostitution, the pimping, the whole thing that goes on with that entire business. So they not only had the individual woman who could be bought, who sold herself, but they had the big business, the stable, if you will, of prostitutes.

Then there's the Greek word *puloke*. *Puloke* means a concubine. A concubine was a slave whose primary function was to fulfill sexual desire. Literally you purchased the concubine, you added her to your fold of concubines and you used her for sexual pleasure. That too was legal, that too was rampant in the Roman world. So there was the one-time woman you purchased and the whole business of prostitution and then there was the long- term purchased woman, the concubine, the slave for sexual pleasure.

And then there was another word, *eteri*. This was different than the concubine, you didn't buy this woman. This was a friend. Typically men and women had these kinds of friends outside their marriage. By the way, your wife was primarily to take care of the house, cook the meals, keep the clothes clean, and watch the children. The wife was not primarily the sexual partner. Sexual fulfillment was found in the one-time enterprise of a prostitute, the long-term responsibility of a concubine, or the now-and-then relationship to this friend who was both an intellectual friend as well as a sexual partner.

And then there was *moichos*, another word. And *moichos* refers to the adulterer or the adulteress. You could have a sexual relationship with a prostitute on an occasional situation which you purchased, you could own a concubine or more concubines for sexual pleasure, you could have mistresses, or reversing the situation, mistresses would have men. For every man who commits sexual sin there is a partner obviously. And this was a friend you didn't buy. This was sort of a mutual agreement, sort of casual sex with someone you knew very well. And then there was *moichos*. That was adulterer or adulteress. That was having sex with somebody else's spouse. And it was all going on, all of it, filling up the Thessalonian as well as the Corinthian as well as the whole Roman culture.

Unmarried young men were also allowed to have intercourse with mistresses. They were encouraged to have intercourse with mistresses, but those mistresses could not be daughters of families that had full citizenship in the Roman Empire. Those were considered significant families and these young men were not to touch those girls. But they could engage themselves with prostitutes and they could engage themselves with mistresses whose parents were not full citizens of the Roman Empire.

Now you could go one step beyond that and add temple prostitutes. The Babylonian, cultic, mystery religions that filtered all the way down into the time of the apostle Paul and were the mythological religions of that time advocated prostitution. Why? Because they taught that if you have relationships with a priestess, prostitute, you are communing with the deity she represents. The way to get in touch with the deity is by a sexual liaison with a priestess. The temple in Corinth, for example, had 3,000 temple prostitutes to get people in contact with the deity, by the way, a very popular and convenient form of religion. But you can see by that that it was not only not illegal, it was condoned. Today, at least in America, religious prostitution is still a crime.

But they had it all. Now you add to that homosexuality, pedophilia, whatever other kinds of deviant things were going on, and that was the culture in which Paul lived and to which he wrote. If you think it's bad today, you probably would have found it worse then. The difference would have been media.

You wouldn't have to have been exposed to it sort of involuntarily to the degree that you do today, to the point now where young people think nothing wrong with it at all, even going so far as some Christian couples who think that because they're engaged they can engage in anything they choose. We have been so desensitized to this sin but so had they in Paul's day.

Sexual sin then was common. Sexual sin was tolerated. Sexual sin was customary just as today and even more so. Now why is that important? It's important because of this, Paul went in to Thessalonica with his two friends Timothy and Silas. They went there to preach the gospel. They went there to found a church. In founding that church they were rescuing people out of this pornographic culture. Obviously these people had lived a pagan life style. They had a former religion in which they engaged in sexual intercourse with temple prostitutes. They probably were involved with concubinage. They no doubt had their *eteri*, their mistresses. They perhaps had their harlots and their whores.

And now all of a sudden they come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ. And there's this little island of salvation in a sea of paganism. And Paul is very concerned about them because he knows that old habits act as a very strong temptation to the new life. You don't forget those habits easily if at all. And the apostle knew that this relatively new group of Christians, only months old in the Lord... He only preached three Sabbaths in the synagogue, a few weeks after that to the Gentiles and then he's gone a few months and he writes back 1 Thessalonians. It's only a few months since they were saved. He knows the pull of those old habits and he knows the push of that wicked culture is going to make this a major problem.

And so, finally he comes to chapter 4 which is his real purpose in writing. The first three chapters he's just been defending his own integrity and the integrity of his ministry and affirming the integrity of the church. It's all been a discussion about himself, his ministry, and the church. It's all foundation. Now here's what he really wants to talk about. He wants to reiterate the commands of Christian living. He wants them to walk as they ought to walk so to please God. He wants them to excel still more and keep the commandments he gave them by the authority of the Lord Jesus. And he starts off in verse 3 all the way to the end of chapter 5 with those commands. Now this is review. He says, "You know what commandments we gave you." Verse 1: "You already received the instruction. You know what we've said." This is only a reminder. Verse 6 at the end: "We told you before and solemnly warned you."

Now it's a good thing to note here, folks, Paul went in, preached the gospel, led these people to Christ and then believe me, he fulfilled the great commission, which is not only to go and not only to baptize, that is to get them saved, but to “teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded

you," Matthew 20:20 says. So he gave them principles of holy living. But he's been gone a few months. He knows the pull and the push, the pull of old habits, the push of a godless, sexually deviated culture. And he is concerned and he wants to share this with them. If he had his choice he would go and tell them face to face, right? Look back in chapter 2:17 and 18. He says he was hindered, he couldn't get there, so he has to write. So starting in chapter 2 he unfolds these exhortations. Number one on the list is a call to sexual purity. That is the first issue. Why? Because the pagan society was so wretched, that was the compelling sin. Why do you think when the apostle Paul writes about the standards for leadership in the church he starts with being above reproach, being a one-woman man? Because that was the dominating cultural milieu, sexual deviation; it's just like today, just like today.

Paul then is building on what he already told them. And he's going to clarify it and he's going to drive it home. The first subject on the list: Sexual sin. Why? Major problem, major issue; the desire is so strong, the temptation is so compelling, the past was so sinful, the society was so corrupt. Paul knows this is a major issue. By the way, no shame was attached to premarital intercourse. No shame was attached to extramarital intercourse. This had been their lifestyle. The Thessalonian culture was famous for sexual vice.

But Paul says, "In spite of cultural habits, in spite of your old patterns, the Lord does not tolerate sexual sin." The church can't live like the world. It doesn't matter how the world lives. Just because the world sinks deeper and deeper and deeper into the muck, doesn't mean we sink with it. Just because they lower their standards lower and lower and lower and lower doesn't mean we lower ours a little bit. This is not a relative morality, this is an absolute standard. It doesn't change. It doesn't fluctuate. All forms of sexual gratification may be indulged in by a society but not the church, not Christians.

Now you might ask, "Well were there some specific people or groups or specific sins that the Thessalonians were committing?" Paul doesn't mention any, not like 1 Corinthians where he writes about the same issue and mentions one guy who was having a sexual relationship with his father's wife, or his step-mother. We don't know of any particulars but we can be very sure that because this is at the top of his list of exhortations as he begins the exhortative section that this was the major problem. And I would believe that it is preventative rather than some specific rebuke or he would have perhaps zeroed in on someone.

Now we come to the passage. As we come to it I'm going to ask three questions and these three questions will give us a very clear understanding of this issue, just three simple questions. Question

number one, what? Question number two, how? Question number three, why?

Question number one, what does God require? Question number two, how can I fulfill it? Question number three, why should I? Okay? That's verses 3 to 8. That will take us right through. Those questions will unfold the deep, direct powerful meaning of this text. Question number one, for this morning, two and three for next week.

Question number one, what does God require in this area of sexual behavior? Verse 3, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is that you abstain from sexual immorality." Pretty clear, isn't it? Just to make sure nobody finds an escape hatch here, let's look more closely at it. "For this is the will of God." It always amazes me how many people are stumbling around trying to find the will of God. You notice that? "For this is the will of God. You want to walk and please God? You want to excel still more? You want to do what God wants you to do? Well then this is it. The word "for" simply introduces the explanation of how to excel more, how to walk right, how to please God, do His commandments. And since all Christians have holy longings, since all Christians have holy aspirations, since all Christians to some degree want to do what's right, because that's what the new nature does, then Paul assumes his readers are desirous of doing God's will and all they need to know is what it is. He assumes — Romans 7 — that you're going to desire to do what's right even though we don't always do it. So he says this is the will of God.

This is not my opinion. This is not some human system. This is God's will. And again I say I am constantly amazed at how many people struggle to know God's will. I really do believe that most of the problems, well I could say it simply, all of the problems that people have are strictly a result of not doing God's will. Would you agree to that? Yeah, I mean if you're in the middle of God's will, that's not a problem. You may have trouble in this world but you'll be riding across the top of it. If people would just know God's will it would be the elimination of all the difficulties in life, not by all positive circumstances but by all positive attitudes under the grace of Christ.

Now what is God's will? I can give it to you very quickly. God's will is that you be saved. And you've heard me say this before. James 1:18, "By His will He begot you." By His will He begot you. God wants you to be saved. Secondly, He wants you to sacrifice. What do you mean by that? "To offer your body as a living (what?) sacrifice which is holy and acceptable and is the will of God." God wants you to yield up yourself to Him. He wants you to be saved and He wants you to make the sacrifice of yourself.

He wants you to be Spirit-controlled. "Don't be unwise but understanding what the will of the Lord is. Be not drunk with wine but be filled with the Spirit." God's will is that you be Spirit-controlled. God's will is that you be saved. God's will is that you make the sacrifice of your body continually to Christ. God's will is that you be Spirit-controlled.

God's will also is that you be satisfied. First Thessalonians 5:18 says, "In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God concerning you." Be satisfied. God's will is that you be satisfied. God's will is that you be submissive. First Peter says, "Submit yourselves to all those in authority." That's the will of God. God's will is that you suffer. First Peter 3:17, "It is the will of God that you suffer awhile for the cause of the gospel." God's will is that you supplicate, or pray. First John 5:14 and 15, all of that is God's will.

Now you show me a person who is saved, continually yielding over their body as a living sacrifice, Spirit-controlled, satisfied, submissive, suffering for the sake of the gospel, supplicating or taking their needs to the Lord according to His will knowing He hears and will answer, and I'll show you a person who is victorious, right? That's not the kind of person who needs to go to the Christian therapist.

But there's one other thing God's will...is God's will and it sort of gobbles up all the rest. It's right here. This is the will of God, your sanctification. What do you mean that...by that? What do you mean sanctification? The word *hagiasmos* means separate, apart, set apart, holy. It simply means this, to be set apart from sin to God. God's will is that you be set apart from sin to God, very simple concept. Here he says this is God's will, your being set apart unto God. Now that's a process, the process of becoming holy. That's God's will. He wants you to become holy, this is His will.

By the way, that little phrase "this is the will of God your sanctification" could really be the sort of umbrella to cover the rest of the book because every other principle that he gives and every other exhortation is an element of sanctification. So there's a sense in which the first part of verse 3 sort of just covers it all. God's will is that you be set apart unto Him in a process of becoming holy from sin toward God and here's how, and all the rest of the whole book will tell you how. But principle number one, look at it, verse 3: That you abstain from sexual immorality. That's the first principle of a sanctified life. If you're not covering this principle in your life, the rest in some ways is a moot point. This is where we start. We start with a holy life.

Back in chapter 3 verse 13, what was Paul's great prayer? That your hearts would be unblamable in holiness before God. God wants you holy. God wants you separated. God wants you set apart from

sin to Him; separation from all that is wicked, all that is filthy, all that is evil, all that is impure, all that is fleshly, all that is sinful. That's the general concept. That's the general introduction to the whole section.

You see, when you were saved you were saved unto sanctification. Paul says in Romans 6:19 and Romans 6:22, "You used to be the slaves of sin." Then he says, "You're now the slaves of righteousness which results in sanctification." The process of becoming holy is a direct result of salvation. You were saved and the process of becoming holy began and step one, abstain from immorality, simple.

What does that mean? Stay away from sex sin. Stay away from sexual sin. Now young people always want to say, "How far away? How far away do I have to stay?" Which means, "How far can I go and still be okay?" Is it okay, you know, to hold hands and hug each other? Is it okay to kiss? Is it okay to touch each other? Is it okay to go beyond that as long you don't do the very act? What can I do? Is it okay if we're engaged? Is it okay if we've decided that we're really the ones and somewhere down the road we are going to get married? How far can I go?"

That isn't even the right question. That question betrays a sinful heart. The question isn't how far can I go and get away with it. The question is, how can I be sanctified, separated from sin and holy unto God? That's the question. That's the question. How can I conduct my physical relationships so that I am holy, which means separated from sin? And as you begin to play with the emotions that God has designed to lead to consummation and intercourse, you begin to allow your mind to move into the area of thinking about that, you are in sin because if a man in his mind commits adultery, God's eyes, he's committed it, right? If a woman commits it in the mind, it's been committed before God because He sees the mind.

You have to stop short of the impure thought, the impure motive, the lustful passion. And we'll say more about that next week, show you how passion works. The question isn't how far can I go and still be okay, the question is how can I be holy, how can I be utterly separated from sin, how can I be totally pure, completely holy unto God, pleasing Him, excelling still more? How can I excel still more? How can I be more excellent? Not how can I drift a little bit the other way and just get on the edge?

As I said, every imaginable and every unimaginable form of sexual vice was running loose in the society in Thessalonica as it is in ours and there were Christians who were weak just as there are Christians today who are weak. There were Christians who were sort of witless and ignorant about things and a bit naive, maybe willfully. There were Christians who were shallow. There were some

who because of former lifestyle or because of exposure to pornographic experiences had had their lusts pandered and pandered and pandered like people who go to the movies all the time or read dirty magazines or listen to that kind of music who literally fuel the fire of their own lusts. They had them then just like there are people today like that. And they would be strongly pulled toward sexual sin. It would have been easy for them to fall into it and that was Paul's concern.

Sometimes some of us think, "Well I don't have those pulls. I didn't have an adulterous life before I was converted. I didn't fornicate before I was converted, or I got married as a virgin and I don't go to those kind of movies." But I'll tell you right now, you live in a society that is lowering and lowering and lowering and lowering the resistance continuously by overexposing us to all of this and laughing at it and treating it as triviality so that we no longer think anything of it. We can see a television show where a prostitute is a...is a comedic character and we can laugh about that because our senses have been so totally dulled to that and as that gets lowered and lowered and lowered and lowered even though we haven't had a wide exposure to that kind of behavior, we can become more susceptible to that kind of a temptation because of our resistance being broken down.

Paul knew that reality. And so he makes a very simple, direct command. It is not complicated at all. He says, "Abstain from immorality." What's the word “abstain” mean? I've got to tell you what it means. *Apechomai*, complete abstinence, stay away from it all together. You say, "What is sexual immorality?" Any act that violates the principles of God's Word, any thought that violates the principle of God's Word leading to that act. Whatever relationship you have with someone in the opposite sex other than your spouse, it had better not include any act or thought designed to culminate in sexual intercourse. I don't care whether you're engaged to them, or whether you're committed, or whatever that might mean, God says total abstinence.

What is immorality? Immorality is the word *porneia*. It simply means illicit sexual behavior. It's a broad word. It covers all form of sexual sin. Anything other than a monogamous relationship in a marriage, anything other than husband and wife, any other sexual relationship to any degree is pornographic by God's standard. Now God isn't down on sex, Hebrews 13. By the way, God invented it to start with for man's pleasure, it even says in the Old Testament. Some people say, "Well it's just for procreation, it's just for having children." No, because even the Old Testament talks about one of the patriarchs sporting with his wife. Now I'm not going to go in to a Hebrew definition of sporting, you can use your imagination. But the idea was it was for pure pleasure.

Now you come to Hebrews 13, in Hebrews 13:4 it says, "Marriage is honorable in all and the bed is undefiled." A marriage bed is undefiled; you can't defile a marriage bed. Two people who are married in bed, that is undefiled, the full expression of sexual pleasure there is by God's design. But

fornicators and adulterers, God will judge, Hebrews 13:4. God draws the line at that point. The marriage bed, that's where the line is drawn. Any bed other than a marriage bed, God will judge.

Now some of you will remember when we first started talking about 1 Thessalonians, I told you that there were very likely critics who were accusing Paul of being like the rest of the false teachers, charlatans, frauds and people who came in seeking sexual favors from women followers. It was pretty typical of ancient times that these phony philosophers and religious leaders would come and they would seek women around them and their goal was to get prestige, to get some power, to make some money and to get sexual favors from women followers. That was pretty typical. By the way, if you think that's old, you better think again. That's going on even today. There are all kinds of religious charlatans who are in it for the sexual favors today as much of the scandals of our own time have revealed. They were accusing Paul of seeking sexual favors from women, so when he says this, that God's standard is total abstinence, he not only gives them a command but he puts his own life on the line as subscribing to that very thing as well.

His attitude: Very simple, total abstinence. God has designed it for the marriage bed alone. In Ephesians 5:3 it says, Paul wrote, "Do not let immorality or any impurity even be named among you as is proper among saints. No kind of immorality, *porneia* again, sexual sin, no kind of impurity should ever be named among you because you are saints," *hagios*, same word, you are set apart, you're holy, you're in process of becoming like God. No kind of sexual sin should ever be so much as named among you. It is utterly inconsistent with sanctification.

In Colossians he says very much the same thing. "Your life is hid with Christ in God." You belong to God, you're in a process of sanctification, consider then the members of your earthly body as dead, or desensitized, insensitive, unresponsive to immorality, impurity, passion and evil desire," words with sexual significance. You're a Christian. Your life is hid with Christ in God. You're headed for glory. You can't be responding to that.

Now the command is very, very, clear, very clear, total abstinence from any sexual relationship outside the marriage bed. And I'll promise you that's God's design not to make your life unhappy but to make your marriage all the bliss that God could possibly intend it to be. Violate it and you will throw into your marriage a component that may result in a disastrous or divorced union. God has given His Word, that's the basic command.

Now you say, "Well that's easy for him to say." That's easy for you to say. We're not supposed to do any of that. The next question obviously comes, how am I supposed to fulfill that? Right? How do I

control myself? Come back next week and I will tell you and in the meantime do your best without the information coming. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we come to You this morning with this serious subject which has so devastated and violated Your church. It is not proper for saints, holy ones. It is not Your will who longs that we be sanctified. God, help us to hear very loudly and clearly and straight forwardly Your command, stay away from it, not to do it, not to feed on it in our minds, not to watch it on a screen or read it. Help us, Lord, help us, to be totally separate from this sin. And like the Thessalonians, it's all around us and some of these dear folks have been saved out of these very habits. This is not easy. This is Your Word to us. Thank You that the design of this is to make our life joyous, blessed, and utterly fulfilled in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

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