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

Spiritual Growth, Part 4
Scripture: Selected Scriptures
Code: 90-27

As we look back over the 20 years of ministry that I've had in this church there have been some very basic things that have been the foundational truths on which we have built our church and our Christian life. And I just want to dig back into those a little bit, kind of wrap that up, Lord willing, tonight.

Now the key to understanding what we're talking about is that it's crucial for all Christians to understand that they must grow in Christ. And in order to grow we have to go back to the basics. What are the basic things that produce spiritual growth, which all of us desire? Non-growth is impossibility, slow growth, I suppose, is a possibility, but we want to grow fast, we want to grow strong, we want to grow to be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

And I do believe that there are times in Christian experience when you can go into sort of a no growth mode. I don't think it can be permanent unless the Lord takes you out of this world in the midst of your sinfulness. But, for the most part, we control the speed of our growth by whether we recognize the principles of growth or not. We said that the master key to all our spiritual growth is to live to the glory of God, to focus our whole life on glorifying God. That's not an easy thing to do, particularly in our society. And I dare say that if we were honest and looked into our own hearts we would all say, "We struggle greatly to live totally to the glory of God." And we get all wrapped up in living for the fulfillment of self, for the expectation of others, for success, for whatever. But we are to live to the glory of God.

Now having said that we discussed what that means. What does it mean to live to the glory of God so we can grow to become more like Christ? And we decided in answering that question to simply go to the Word of God and identify in the Word of God what it says about glorifying God. How do we do that? If we understand how we do that then we'll understand how we grow.

First of all we noted that the first way in which you glorify God is by confessing Jesus as Lord. Philippians chapter 2 verses 9-11 says, "That we are to confess Jesus as Lord to the glory of God the Father." It glorifies God when you confess Jesus is Lord. That's salvation and that's where spiritual growth begins.

The second thing we noted was that we glorify God when we aim our life at that purpose. And we reminded ourselves of 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God." In other words aim your life at the purpose of glorifying God.

That means preferring his kingdom above all else. That means being content to do His will at any cost. That means suffering when He is dishonored. And that means being content to be outdone by others as long as he gets the glory. Aiming your life at the glory of God.

Thirdly we said, "We glorify God by the confession of sin." We dug back into the Old Testament, looked at Joshua chapter 7 verse 19, where it says, "Confess your sin and give glory to God." God is glorified when we acknowledge our sin, when we recognize it, when we face it, when we accept the responsibility for it and when we agree with God that he has a right to chasten us.

Fourthly we said that God is glorified when we trust him. In Romans 4 it says, "Abraham was strong in faith, giving glory to God." And we talked about how we glorify God by believing Him. And, of course, He is trustworthy and ought to be believed and He is glorified when we do believe His word.

And then we said we glorify God by bearing fruit. John 15:8 says, "Herein is my Father glorified that you bear much fruit."

And then sixthly we said, "We glorify God by praising Him." Psalm 50:23 says, "Whoso offers praise glorifies Me." Now there's a half a dozen principles by which we glorify God through which we grow to be more like Christ.

Now let me see if I can give you briefly another half dozen tonight that will not labor because those were major ones and these are major also but we want to draw them together in a little briefer fashion if we can.

Number 7...if you're keeping a list...we glorify God through prayer. It's fitting that we talk about that tonight because this wraps up our monthly emphasis of prayer. Please turn in your Bible to John chapter 14, John chapter 14. And looking at verse 13...remember the context...Jesus has been telling his disciples that he is going to leave them and they are very very grieved by that that's why he starts the chapter by saying, "Stop letting your heart be troubled," because their hearts were troubled. They were troubled because of what they heard Jesus say. "I'm going away and where I'm going you can't come." He said that at the end of chapter 13. He said in verse 36, "Where I go you can't follow Me now but you'll follow later." And so they were greatly grieved by that. And Peter even asked, "Why can't I follow you now? I'll lay down my life for you." And Jesus said, "No you won't lay down your life for me you will deny me three times before the cock crows." And then in 14 he says, "Stop letting your heart be troubled."

They were troubled at the prospect of losing Christ. To their troubled hearts he brings a tremendous promise in verse 13. You see they had learned to depend on Him for everything. When they needed food He created it. When they needed tax money He caught a fish and took it out the fish's mouth. When they needed information He gave it. When they needed direction He provided it. When they

needed comfort He offered it. They had come to depend on Him for everything. They had walked away from their families, they had walked away from their careers and they were committed totally and solely to following Christ and having Him provide their resources. And now He has announced to them that He's leaving and that is really leaving them in the proverbial lurch. They have put all their eggs in one basket and now they're being told that the basket is leaving.

Now in order to encourage their hearts notice what he says in verse 13, "And whatever you ask in My name that will I do." And here's the reason, "That the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it." Now this is a tremendous promise. It's a promise about resources. It's a promise about provision. And Jesus is saying, "Because I'm gone doesn't mean you'll be destitute." Because I'm gone doesn't mean you won't have what you need. "Because," he says, "whatever you ask in My name I will do." And he says it twice, once in verse 13 and immediately repeats it in verse 14. Whatever you ask in My name. What does it mean to ask in Jesus name? What does that mean? Does that mean to prayer whatever you want and the end tack on, In Jesus name Amen? And if you do that you get it. Is that a gimmick?

I can remember as a little kid thinking that people who didn't say that at the end of their prayer probably didn't get their prayer answered. And I would hear people pray and they would just say Amen without saying In Jesus name and I would think, "Oh they'll never get that prayer answered. They didn't say, In Jesus name Amen." It became sort of a hook. And when you said that God was hooked and had to deliver. But that's not what is intended to be mentioned here at all.

What does it mean to pray in My name? Simply stated the Name of Christ is the embodiment of all that He is and all that He does and all that He wants. In the Old Testament God said, "My name is I am that I am." Do you remember that in Exodus? "My name is I am that I am." My name is who I am and who I am is reflected in what I do and what I think and what I plan and what I desire. God says that My name is consistent with all that I am. "And when we pray," Jesus says, "we are to prayer consistent with all that Christ is." And when you pray and ask something that is consistent with the Person, work and purpose and will of Christ he will do it. That's the intention. That's what it means to say. In My name means according to My merit. It means in union with my Person. In union with My purpose. In union with My plan. That's what it means. It is praying in concert with Christ. Praying in harmony with Christ. It is the same thing, I believe, that is mentioned by Paul twice when he says, "Pray in the spirit." That's not ecstatic speech. That's not flipping out and speaking in tongue. Praying in the spirit is praying consistently with the mind of the spirit. Praying consistently with the will of the spirit, just like praying in the name of Christ is praying consistently with the will of Christ. Anything I ask that is consistent with the Person, purpose, plan of Christ he'll do. Prayer is the arena in which God supplies His children's needs. And whatever I ask consistent with His will he'll do it.

Now that's so important to say because there's so much heresy floating around today about this matter of prayer. And all of this positive confession that you hear propagated by people on television.

The Kenneth Hagan, Kenneth Copeland, Fred Price-kind of theology that says, "You can demand anything out of God and he's got to deliver." Very dangerous, very dangerous and not true. God is not cornered by any believer. He's not forced to deliver because we've recited some formula. We are not so important in God's economy that whatever we want He has to give us. That would make us sovereign and Him subject. But if it's consistent with the name of Christ, that is, His Person, His purpose, His plan, then He'll give it to us.

But notice the reason. This is so very important. Does it say, "In order that you might be satisfied?" No. Verse 13 says, "In order that...it's a purpose clause...the Father may be...what?...glorified in the Son." The point is this, Beloved, when you pray God answers to put His glory on display. Did you get that? And so our prayers should be, "Father glorify yourself." And that's how Jesus taught us to pray. Our Father who Art in heaven hallowed be thy Name. Thy kingdom...what?... come...Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Put yourself on display, that's how to pray. Prayer provides opportunity for God to display His power, for God to put Himself on exhibit for us to see.

There was a gentleman in our church a number of years ago by the name of Frank. He was a very gracious man. He and his family moved to the East Coast. I remember them very well and from time to time receive correspondence from them even to this day. One day I was walking over by the gym and he stopped me in the patio. We were having our services at the time in the gym. It was our worship center then. And he said to me, he said, "John...I had not met him except casually before... he said, "Is there anything that you have in your life for which I can pray?" And I said, "Well thank you for asking." I said, "Sure." He said, "Just a minute I want to write it down." He took out a spiral notebook, flipped it open to a page that was about half full, he wrote down the date in the left hand column and then proceeded to write down everything I told him that I wanted him to pray about. He wrote it all down, I gave him three or four things, and drew a little line in his notebook and thanked me. A few weeks later he accosted me again in the parking lot and he said, "By the way, John," he said, "you remember those things I've been praying for? I've been praying for you every day about that." He said, "Could you tell me how all of those things have worked out?" And he opened up his notebook to the page on which he had the requests I gave him and I told him such and such...such and such and he wrote it all in and then he dated it all. And he thanked me and asked me to give him a few more and he wrote them in. And just about every time I met him this little dialogue and byplay went on.

I had one occasion to visit his home. And when I was in his home...he became somewhat of a curiosity to me, admittedly, because he was so deeply into this writing down everything. And when I was visiting in his home on one occasion he took me to his bookshelf and he pointed out that he had 12 spiral notebooks already filled and the one that I was contributing to was number 13. And they were all full of requests and answers. He had a tremendous faith in God. And you see the benefit of all of that was simply in his life God had put Himself on display. And if you said to him, "Frank do you think God answers pray?" What do you think he'd say? "Yeah, what do you want? I've got a few

cancers in book 5, page 8. I've got heart disease over here in book 7, page 23. I got a healed family over here in book 2. What would you like to see?" And I began to realize in my mind that the calculated benefit of prayer is not to get what I want but to have a greater trust in the God who answers prayer because I've seen God on display. And this dear man had a chronicle of the acts of God in the life of Frank and friends to which he could refer and give God glory.

It isn't so important that you and I pray in order to get what we want. In fact, to be honest with you, I don't want what I want; I want what God wants. Don't you? But it is wonderful for me to be engaged in a prayer life that allows God to put Himself on display so that I grow to trust Him and love Him and adore Him and praise Him and glorify Him. And I see prayer, not primarily as getting what I want, but learning to line up with what God wants. That's praying in the spirit, praying in accord with His will, and you glorify God when you do that. You want to glorify God? Then ask in the Sons name and He'll do it that the Father may be glorified in the Son. He puts Himself on display.

You ever go to a flock group or fellowship group or a Bible study or something and somebody stands up and says, "Well you know Sally so and so was saved." And some people sort of sit there scratching their ear and staring around the room and, you know, nothing happens and other people go, "Oh, praise the Lord. Oh." You know? Do you know what the difference is? The happy ones were involved in what? Praying for Sally. It isn't that the salvation of that soul is dependent upon your prayer, as if God isn't gonna save anybody unless you get in the act, but it is that if you were involved in the prayer then you're involved in the power and you're involved in the glorifying of God. So if you want to have a full, rich and exciting life get plugged into praying according to the will of Christ, see God put Himself on display and learn how to give Him glory for what He does.

Let me give you another one. We glorify God by unity, by unity. Look at Romans chapter 15. There's so much to be said on each of these but I want to try to keep moving. I don't know how well I'll do at getting through them. We glorify God by unity. Romans 15...Romans 15. As Paul, writing in this practical section of the great doctrinal epistle, finally winds down and begins to focus on the congregation at Rome to whom he writes, "He comes to this matter of unity...coming off of the stronger brother/weaker brother discussion in chapter 14 and the first part of 15. We come down to verse 5. This is what Paul writes, "Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one anther according to Christ Jesus, that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God." It glorifies God when we accept each other, doesn't it? It glorifies God when we have the same mind toward one another. That's unit, that's unity.

Philippians 2 says, in very simple terms, "That we are to consider others better than ourselves." It says, "Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose," one purpose. "Doing nothing from sulkinessor empty conceit, with humility of

mind let each regard one another as more important than himself." Being of the same mind, the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. God is glorified in our unity. What does it mean to have the same love? Love everybody the same? You say, "But everybody's not as lovable." That's right. So we have to love them with the supernatural love that God provides, a self-sacrificing love. And it's born out of humility. The thing that kills unity is pride. The thing that creates pride, of course, is sinful desire. But the anecdote to pride is obviously humility. If we want unity it's born out of humility. That's basic. We'll never know unity in the church until we know love and we'll never know true love until we know humility. And humility says, "I care about you more than I care about me." That's the simple definition of humility. Humility says, "I'd sacrifice anything I have for you. I'd sacrifice anything I'd like to do for what you'd like to do. I'd give up anything that I possess if it met your need." And it's out of that humility that looks on others as better than one's self that love comes and it's out of love that unity comes. And it's out of unity that God is glorified.

And you can know how the heart of God is grieved over the disunity of the church, tragic. And disunity and discord and disharmony in the church is basically a result of pride, of people demanding, instead of people sacrificing, of people being proud rather than people being humble. But note, please, he says, "Accept one another just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God." God would be so glorified if His church was one. Didn't Jesus say, "By this shall all men know you're My disciples if you have...what?...love for one another," John 13:34 and 35. If we had self-sacrificing love for each other the world would take note of us. Unity in the church, crucial. I don't think we sacrifice doctrine for this but I think, again, it's born out of humility. It's born out of humility. Humility produces love, love produces unity.

Number 9 in our little list. There's so much more to say on the last one. Number 9 is obedience. We glorify God by obedience to His word. In 1 Peter chapter 4, among many Scriptures that treat the matter of obedience, it says in verse 14, "If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or evildoer, or as a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God." And the idea here is you obey God whatever the consequence, whatever. If anyone suffers as a fourth class condition, it's very possible that you might, but no matter what the consequences you obey, even if you're reviled, even if you suffer you maintain purity. Don't suffer as a murderer or thief, evildoer, troublesome meddler. If you're gonna suffer, suffer for your character as a Christian. In that you glorify God, whatever the cost, whatever the cost.

This is illustrated magnificently in John 21 in a very familiar illustration. Turn to it, if you will. In John 21 we find, again, the Lord encountering Peter. And I don't want to go into all of it because you're familiar with it, I'm quite certain. Jesus is risen from the dead and He told his disciples to go to Galilee and wait for Him there. He told them to go into a mountain and stay there. They stayed in the mountain for a brief time and then decided they didn't want to wait any longer. They grew impatient

and they disobeyed the Lord.

They came down the mountain and they went fishing. "And there were there...in verse 2...Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, sons of Zebedee; James and John and two others; Phillip and Andrew, no doubt...and they all went fishing. In fact, Simon Peter says, "I'm going fishing," I'm going fishing. It's as if he was gonna return to his old trade. There's finality in that aorist verb there. It's as if he's saying, "I'm going back to what I used to do. I can't cut it in the ministry." He had a rather consistent track record of failure. And they were followers and he was the leader and like a bunch of rubber ducks they all walked down the mountain and got I the boat and they couldn't catch anything. And you remember how that Jesus came and said, "Have you caught anything?" And they said, "No." He said, "Try to right side of the boat,"...verse 6, "and they did and there were so many fish in their net that they could hardly haul it in."

"And then Peter dove in, went to the shore, met with Christ, they had breakfast together. . .verse 12. . .Jesus invited them to breakfast and none of the disciples ventured to question Him, "Who are you?" because they all knew it was the Lord. And Jesus came and took the bread and gave them, and the fish likewise." He served them breakfast. "This was the third time he was manifest to them after being raised from the dead. After they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter. . .and then you know the dialogue. . . Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these? "These What?" "These nets, fish, boats, these accoutrements of fishing?" A possibility. Could be that he meant these other disciples. We saw it a little earlier tonight, "If all forsake, I'll never forsake. You can trust me. I love you more than all the rest," is implied. And he's saying here, "Do you really love me more than the rest?" And the implication is if you love me you would have obeyed me. If you loved me you would have stayed in the mountain where I told you to stay and you wouldn't go back to the fishing.

So Peter knows he can't affirm that he loves the Lord in the same way the Lord asks. The Lord says, "Do you love me?" and uses the strongest word for volitional love of choice and obedience. And Peter says, "Yes Lord, you know that I love You," and uses a completely different word that means I have a great affection for You. "Lord I can't claim the highest love but I like you a lot." And the reason he wouldn't claim the highest love was because of his disobedience. It would have been hypocritical. And the Lord went through that dialogue with him again. "Simon do you really love me?" Agapaho. And he says, "I like you a lot." And the third time the Lord says, "Do you really like me a lot?" And uses Peter's word and even questions the legitimacy of that claim. And Peter was grieved in his heart. He said, "You know all things. You know I like you a lot." And Jesus in all three of those affirmed his call to the ministry, "Tend my land, shepherd my sheep, tend my sheep."

And after that sort of re-dedication of Peter we come to verse 18, follow it. "Truly, truly I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself." Peter you've been pretty well in control of your life. "You got up, put your own clothes on, put on your belt and walked wherever you wished." You've had a lot of latitude, a lot of freedom and a lot of liberty. "But when you grow old, Peter, you

will stretch out your hands." Some have seen in that a reference to crucifixion because that very same phrase is used in extra biblical literature to describe a crucifixion. And we know Peter was crucified upside down. "But you will stretch out your hands and someone else will bind you or gird you and bring you where you do not wish to go." You're gonna lose your freedom in the future

Verse 19; now follow it. "Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would...what?...glorify God." By what kind of death he would glorify God. Glorifying God means obeying no matter what the cost. It means obeying even if it means death. It means obeying even if it means suffering. That is the principle, obedience at any price. That brings glory to God.

It says in 1 John 2:5, "Whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected." You love God perfectly when you obey Him perfectly, no matter what the cost. Obedience glorifies God. Somehow you need to get this into your own heart. You need to get this into your own soul. You need to get this into your own mind because this, I believe, is the greatest insulation against compromise. If you realize that God is glorified by obedience, no matter what the cost, and if you're living for the glory of God, that eliminates compromise. Because you want to glorify God, and this is how you do it.

People often say to me, "You know you have such strong convictions and you don't compromise." That's not a commendation for me, that's simply that I understand the principle that simply says, "I want to live my life to the glory of God. And if I chose to live my life to the glory of God that means I obey His word no matter what it cost."

Recently you've been aware of this situation with Grove City that went to the courts and the courts decided that any institution receiving any federal money would have to have an open hiring policy and allow women and homosexuals and minorities and all of that to be hired. And some have questioned does that affect the church? Does that affect the college, say, the Master's College, the Master's Seminary? I would just encourage you by saying it does not. At the college in 1985 we filed a special government provision exemption from any of that because the first amendment still guarantees our religious freedom. So some people have been making an issue out of a non-issue. Somebody even asked me, "What are you gonna do when they make Grace Church hire homosexuals?" Well that hasn't happened yet but when it does happen I won't do that. We won't hire homosexuals. "Well what will happen?" Well, if need be, we'll go to jail because the desire of our hearts is to glorify God. And if you desire to glorify God then you obey His word and you obey His word with joy in your heart and there's no room for compromise. I don't have any reason to believe that this particular case, which the president vetoed and then the congress overrode in the senate, as any such impact on the church but it may be a harbinger of things to come in the future. And if such things do come in the future I think it's gonna get very, very interesting in Christianity. We're gonna find out who wants to live an uncompromising life and who doesn't, which would be very good for the church, very good. So we glorify God in obedience, in obedience.

You know a gentleman said to me the other day, he said, "You know I'm out of the ministry because of a divorce in my life." And he said, "I really want to get back into the ministry." And I said to him in so many words, "Why don't you forget the ministry and just live to the glory of God where you are?" That's all God ever wanted anyway. And I said, "You've got a real problem if you try to come back into the ministry with that situation because you haven't given evidence...as 1 Timothy 3 says...of managing your own household well. And some might question whether you're a one-woman man, since you've divorced your wife and married another woman. And some would question whether or not you could stand up in front and be the model of spiritual virtue." But I said, "Those things aside, all God wants out of you now is that you live for His glory. Be obedient and let Him use you in whatever why He would choose."

Number 10. We glorify God by proclaiming His word, by proclaiming His word. It's not really very mystical is it? Very practical. Listen to 2 Thessalonians 3:1, "Finally brethren pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified." The Apostle Paul had the sense that when the word of God was proclaimed God was glorified. God's name was exalted. God's Person was lifted up. I love that.

Listen to Galatians 1. Paul writes in verse 22, "And I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea, which were in Christ." In other words they didn't know Paul after his conversion. "But only, that they kept hearing, "He who once persecuted us is now preaching the faith which he once tried to destroy." Paul is now preaching, "And they were glorifying God because of me." They were glorifying God because a sinner had repented and was preaching the Word. The proclamation of the Word glorifies God. Presenting the Word of God gives him glory. Why? Because it reveals Him and it releases His power, for the Word goes forth with great power. When you proclaim God's Word you are giving Him glory. Beloved, that's the thrill. That's the thrill for me. That's the fun of the ministry, just to know that when I stand in this place to teach the Word of God that give Him glory. Why? Because it reveals the majesty and the beauty and the magnificence of His Person. He is glorified in His self- disclosure, in His self-revelation. And when you have the privilege of bringing others to submit to the Word of God, that gives God glory. What a tremendously beautiful thing. By simply proclaiming the Word of God you put Him on display, you put Him on display.

And more and more as I live and minister I'm convinced that the issue is not to argue about the Scripture but to proclaim it. The issue is just to let God's Word do its work. It is, after all, alive and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing of centerof soul and spirit, joints and morrow, as a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Do some of you remember about a month ago we had a baptismal service? I can't remember whether it was the one at the Shepherd's Conference or the one immediately before that. A gentleman came in to be baptized who announced to all of us that all his lifelong he had been an atheist. Do you remember that? And he talked about how he had all these intellectual arguments against Christianity and in a moment of time God literally

blasted his atheism into bits. And it had nothing to do with some logical presentation or some clever apologetics; it was just the spirit of God shattering his atheism. And it basically was born out of the fact that he was overwhelmed by his own sin and lostness. It's so wonderful to be able to proclaim the powerful Word of God. It gives God glory, it reveals who He is, it puts Him on display. That's a great privilege. Two more.

Number 11. We glorify God by moral purity, by moral purity. 1 Corinthians chapter 6...1 Corinthians chapter 6. Let's look at this, verses 12 and following. Paul writes, "All things are lawful for me...that is all things that are not unlawful, all things that are not stated as unlawful or sinful...but not all are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by any." And then he goes into this discussion, "Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food." That was kind of a proverbial expression. "Meat for the belly and the belly for meat, the old author _____. It's kind of a pagan statement. "Food is made for the stomach, the stomach was made for food." But it was really a veiled statement and it was intending to say things on a sexual plane, much like the famous playboy philosophy. "The body's for sex and sex is for the body." "It's just biological," that's what they were saying. "This is just biological".

I was reading in a magazine in the airplane the other day a recent sex investigators. . .Master's and Johnson, who have done this new test, which reveals sexual habits related to AIDS, they said the average non-married person that they interviewed; the average male had 9.8 partners a year, the average female, something like 11.3. This is just recreation. This is just biological. There's nothing sacred attached to it; it's just meat for the belly and the belly for meat, that's all. And that's the expression that Paul picks up out of his culture. And then says, "And God will do away with both of them." The body is not for immorality, it's for the Lord and the Lord is for the body. Your body should be dedicated to the Lord. It is not for immorality. It is not as simple as saying, "Well it's just biological." It's not.

In verse 15 he says, "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ?" Wow! "Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot?" May it never be; mayginata , in the Greek. The strongest negative possible. No, no, no, no. If my body belongs to Christ and I joined by body to a harlot I join Christ to that harlot, unthinkable. May it never be, may it never be. "Or do you not know...verse 16...that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her? For he says...God does back in Genesis...the two will become one flesh." When you join with a harlot that's not biological that's the binding of two people together, far more than biological. "But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him." You join to the Lord you're one with Him. You join yourself to somebody other than your wife then you're one with that person. Or other than your husband you're one with that person. You have confounded your union with Christ. You have dragged Christ into that immoral situation. And so in verse 18 he says, "Flee immorality." Run from it. "Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body."

There's something deep and intrinsic in sexual sin that reaches way down inside people and commits sin at a very deep level. And I'm not sure I'll ever understand all that's intended by that statement in verse 18. But I do understand verses 19 and 20, "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?" Here it is folks. "You have been bought with a price: therefore...do what?...glorify God in your body." How do you glorify God? By moral purity, by moral purity. Immorality brings dishonor to God. It is an abomination to God.

Now let me get very practical. I believe it's an abomination to God on all fronts. Doing it is an abomination to God. Thinking about doing it is an abomination to God. Reading about others who do it is an abomination to God. Watching someone in a film do it is an abomination to God. It's all an abomination. I, for one, do not understand how people who know this can sin sexually, except for the fact that they allow themselves to be tempted and chose not the way of escape. I cannot understand how people can possibly go to PG or R or whatever other kind of rated movies and watch the kind of trash that is an abomination to God and call it entertainment. I cannot understand how people can do that and say, "Well the rest of it was good. I don't notice that part." I don't buy that for 10 seconds or 1 second. It's an abomination to God. And you're gonna live to His glory or you're not. You're gonna glorify God in your body or you're not.

There're some principles to help you with this in 1 Thessalonians 4. 1 Thessalonians 4 says in verse 3, "This is the will of God, your sanctification." And then he gives several principles, 1: "Abstain from sexual immorality." Abstain from sexual immorality. Boy, I mean, if you give that message to our society today they'd think you just arrived from some time warp because that's a way of life. That's the number one recreation now. But the Bible says, "Abstain from sexual immorality." Stay away from it. Secondly it says, "Possess your vessel in sanctification and honor." I take it the vessel here means your body and possess means to control. Get your body under control. Five says, "Not in lustful passion." Evil desire like the pagans who do not know God. Don't act like the pagans. Don't be controlled by lust. Don't be controlled by passion. Don't be controlled by desire. That's for people who don't know God. Verse 6, "That no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter." In other words, don't abuse and use people.

Let me tell you how the sexual games are played. You do what your desire tells you to do and you use people. You transgress against them, you defraud them, you steal from them. If you want to have sexual purity then, #1 abstain from sexual immorality, #2 control your body, #3 don't let yourself all into worldly patterns of lustful passion and don't think and act like people who don't know God and don't use other people to your own ends; transgressing and defrauding others in this matter. And if all of that doesn't keep you from doing it remember this, "That the Lord is the avenger in all these things." People always ask me, "Do you think AIDS is the judgment of God?" Of course it's a judgment of God. It's a judgment of God built into human life; that if you violate God's divine standard

there are consequence.

And I think for the first time, at least in my life, people are running in a state of panic about their sexual sin because they're beginning to see the consequence. The consequence of AIDS pales in light of the consequence of an eternal hell for those who live consistently a lifestyle like this. And if you don't like this teaching don't come to me.

Verse 8 says, "You're not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you." And there he has believers in mind. So moral purity glorifies God.

And one last thought. We glorify God by bringing others to Christ. By bringing others to Christ. In 2 Corinthians there is a beautiful verse. The 15th verse of the 4th chapter says this, Paul writes, "For all things are for your sakes...in other words everything I do I do to reach you...in order that the grace...that is saving grace...which is spreading to more and more people may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God." Isn't that incredible? 2 Corinthians 4:15...you ought to mark that one down, you ought to circle it, put a mark in the margin. This is it. Paul says, "All that we do is for you, in order that the grace which is spreading to more and more people...saving grace...may cause the giving of thanks to abound to the glory of God."

You glorify God when you proclaim Him and others are saved. Salvation glorifies God. Why? Because what Paul is saying is it adds one more voice to the hallelujah chorus. Do you see it? More and more people are giving thanks and that abounds to the glory of God. Every time you lead someone to Christ that's somebody else to give thanks. Whenever I have occasion to have the privilege of leading someone to Christ I realize that there's a whole person added to the hallelujah chorus who can then live a life of glory to God. And I've reproduced myself, in a sense, by the power of the spirit, not by my own strength. That's tremendous. Every time you look at someone praising God and glorifying God and thanking the Lord and rejoicing in Him, and you know that that pleases God, you can be thankful that they came to know Him.

Beloved, God is glorified when you lead someone to the knowledge of Him. In fact, you can double that capacity to glorify God. Now it's not just you it's you and someone else. In a very real sense we should be evangelizing for the reason. When is the last time you share Christ with someone? When is the last time you talked to someone about the gospel, opened up your heart to them? Do you think really...in your mind do you ever think this? Here is a person who is living in rebellion against God, who is refusing to glorify God, that's not right. How marvelous it would be if they would give glory to God, if they would become an agent by which God could be glorified? He is so worthy. That, perhaps, is a fresh impetus for us to share the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Acts...just a couple of verses to underscore this...chapter 11 verse 18. Do you remember that the apostles had come back? Peter had gathered with those in Jerusalem and Peter tells about

conversions, conversions of Gentiles. And in verse 17 he says, "If God therefore gave to them the same gift as he gave to us, also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?" He says to these Jewish leaders of the church, "I couldn't stop God from saving Gentiles. Who was I to try to stop Him from doing it?" The implication is that the Jews probably would have liked if Gentiles hadn't been saved, at least, that was the assumption. But God had moved on their hearts. "And when they heard this and they knew it was God, they quieted down...look at this...and glorified God." Not only does a person who is saved glorify God but the people who have found out a person was saved glorifies God. So bringing others to the Savior brings glory to God. From the person saved and the people who are in on it.

Romans 15:8, "For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers...listen...and for the Gentiles, in order to glorify God for His mercy." Christ has come to save Jews and Gentiles so they could glorify God for His mercy. That's the all-consuming goal of life; to glorify God, glorify God. Simply spoken, that's why we live, to aim our life at glorifying God. To glorify Him by confession of sin, to glorify Him by trusting Him, to glorify Him by fruitfulness, to glorify Him by praise, to glorify Him by prayer, by unity, by obedience; no matter what the cost, to glorify Him by proclaiming His Word, to glorify Him by moral purity, and to glorify Him by bringing others to salvation. That's why we live. That's why we live.

In Ephesians 3 and verse 21 there's a benediction. "To Him be the glory in the church." How can God receive glory in His church? How can there be glory for Him in His church? We've seen how, when His church lives to His glory. He wants glory in the church, that's us. He wants to be glorified through us.

Beloved, as we live to the glory of God we grow spiritually and we grow to the fullness of the stature of Christ. I trust that's your goal. Now these basis that I've given you, you need to follow up on, make yourself a little list, constantly be calling yourself accountable to that list of things. I can't tell you, dear friends, I need to be reminded about this all the time because these things slip, so often, even in my mind. And there refreshed to me often by the spirit of God.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank you tonight for just this simple coming together of Your people, around Your Word, to sing Your praises, who enjoy You. We pray that a little look at the basics tonight might help us reshape the foundation of our life. Help us to come to grips with these simple, yet, profound things that bring You glory and bring us joy and purpose.

Help us to glorify You. Help us to know that we can't do it on our own. Help us to remember the truth of 2 Corinthians 3:18, "That as we gaze at your glory we are changed into Your image by the Holy Spirit who moves us from one level of glory to the next." Help us to focus on Your glory and let the spirit of God move us from one level of glory to the next, as we are better able to glorify you each passing day. Work in every heart to accomplish Your holy purpose. In Christ's name. Amen.

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