

OpenTheo

7th Commandment (Part 2)



Ten Commandments - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses the 7th commandment and the importance of avoiding adultery. He emphasizes that adultery is a crime against marriage, family, and society, and warns against the risks and consequences of indulging in sexual misconduct. Gregg also stresses the need to love one's spouse and resist temptation through the fear of God, citing biblical examples such as David and Joseph. He concludes by urging listeners to seek daily guidance and strength from God's Word and to avoid idleness and temptation.

Transcript

We will continue talking about the 7th commandment. There are ten in the Decalogue in Exodus chapter 20, and last week we began talking about the 7th, which is thou shalt not commit adultery. And since I was unable to finish it in the time allotted last week, I felt it would be good to take it in two pieces so that we didn't end up either last week or this week spending the late hours here in this meeting.

Let me just summarize quickly what we have talked about already. If you were not here, this will be for your benefit. If you were here, it wouldn't hurt also to hear it recapped, I'm sure.

We saw that in Job 31.11, Job spoke of adultery as a heinous crime. I don't know how you pronounce that word, I guess it's heinous. And God speaks of adultery in Jeremiah chapter 29 and verse 23 as villainy.

It's an atrocity. It's a great crime. And it's not only a crime against God, it's a crime against society and it's a crime against your own self.

We saw that it's a crime against society and that the marriage, that is the family, is the basic unit of society. And we know that when the family begins to break down in any society, that society is beginning to deteriorate as well. And it is a crime against marriage and therefore it's a crime against society to commit adultery.

First of all, it's a breach of an oath. I mentioned last week that under the law there were penalties both for fornication and adultery. And if you're not familiar with the distinction,

fornication just means any illicit sexual activity outside of marriage.

As for instance, when two unmarried people have sexual relations with each other, that's fornication. But if one of those parties is married to someone else and they're having relations with someone that is not their partner, then that is adultery. Adultery is the special term for that sexual misconduct which adulterates a marriage.

And the penalty for adultery in the Old Testament was much greater than the penalty of fornication. Though both were bad and both are forbidden to the Christian, yet we can see the comparative severity of the judgment in that if two people who are unmarried committed fornication in the Old Testament, they would have to get married. That was their penalty.

And if it was impossible for them to get married because the father of the woman would not permit it, then the man would have to pay a sum of money to get out of it alive. But if adultery was committed, both parties would be put to death. Even though in either case the sexual act was the same, the difference in the case of adultery was that there was a breaking of an oath.

It was defrauding a person to whom you owed fidelity. And breaking an oath is not a small matter. God is very specific about how He wants us to keep our oaths or keep our word.

And when you get married, of course, you pledge and swear that you'll be faithful for life to your partner. And so adultery is a breaking of an oath, a breaking of a covenant. So it is a real breach of contract.

And that's one of the ways in which it's a crime against the marriage. Furthermore, fornication itself, even if neither party is married at the time when such an act takes place, it's nonetheless a crime against the future marriage of either of those people or both of them. And perhaps that's why they had to marry each other in that case.

Because if not, then the woman, being no longer a virgin, would be defiled for her future husband. Fornication done before marriage is a crime against the future marriage. As we saw also in the Old Testament, if a man found out that his bride was not a virgin, she could be put to death for it.

Because it was the same penalty as adultery. Even though she had committed an act which was not considered technically adultery at the time, nonetheless it was a crime against her future marriage. And therefore the husband who found his wife to be in such a case was able to have her punished according to the law regarding adultery.

So both fornication between unmarried parties and adultery are essentially the same crime. And therefore neither of them are permissible or tolerable among godly people. And it's a crime against the marriage.

I said that one reason adultery is such an evil crime, more than others, is that it makes another person sinful as well. If you commit murder, or if you steal, or if you covet, or if you dishonor your father or your mother, you do not defile another person that way morally. You harm them, of course, if you murder them or if you steal from them.

You do them harm, but you don't make them sin. You alone do the sinning in such a case as that. But in the case of adultery, you not only sin, but you cause another person to sin.

And Jesus said that if you would cause someone to stumble, especially if it were a believer, that it were better for you that a millstone be tied around your neck and you cast in the sea. That's how severe it is, Jesus said, for those who cause another person to sin or to stumble into sin. And so, adultery is a crime against your fellow, well, against your partner because you cause them to sin also and make them culpable before God.

Which no other sin, none of the other Ten Commandments really cause you to do that. It also sows discord in a marriage, of course, if a married person has an affair with someone outside the marriage. It causes discord one way or another.

If the thing is never found out by their spouse, nonetheless, there's always that secret that's held that keeps the relationship from being what it is. There's that lack of openness and transparency that should exist in the marriage. And if the thing is found out very frequently, if not always, it causes great distrust and other problems within the marriage.

So that adultery is a source of discord and ruins or hurts the relationship of the married people. The Bible says that God hates him that sows discord among brethren in Proverbs chapter 6 and verse 19. Those who sow discord, and that certainly is done when adultery occurs between a man and a woman.

And furthermore, it's a crime against marriage and society in that it lowers a man to the level of an animal. The distinction between animals and man in procreation is that man is ordained to have one partner. Some animals do this also, but most animals are not that picky.

And it is a distinctive of humanity that God has ordained that one man should have one woman to bring forth all of his children and to live together and to become one flesh for his whole life. That is not the case with most animals. But when a person breaks out of that marriage bond and begins to have relations with someone outside that, he reduces his own self to the level of a beast.

So in Jeremiah chapter 5 and verse 8, God says, When I had fed them to the full, they committed adultery. They lined up in troops outside of the harlot's houses. They were like fed horses.

Every man was neighing after his neighbor's wife. Like horses, like beasts. That's what adultery does.

And if everyone would commit adultery, then it would reduce all human society, of course, to the level of the jungle. It is the fact that God has demanded and enforced fidelity between husbands and wives that has kept human society as much organized as it is. And so, of course, adultery is a crime against the family and against society.

It's also a crime, as I said, against God. Because the Bible says your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. And anyone who defiles God's temple, he will destroy.

We saw scriptures about that in 1 Corinthians. You defile the temple. We said that the temple in Jerusalem, which the Jews used for worship, was so sacred that if anyone other than a Levite touched it, they could be put to death.

And the holy things in the temple could be used for nothing other than the worship of God, because they were holy. They were set apart for that. And it says in 1 Thessalonians 4 that your body is not for fornication, but in fact, you must learn to possess your vessel in sanctification or holiness and honor.

Because your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, your body is a part, a member of Christ, Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 6. And he said, shall I take the members of Christ and join them to a harlot? We have not always been very aware of how intimately Christ associates himself with us, his body. It says in Ephesians 5, we are of his flesh and of his bones.

It says, know ye not that you are members of Christ? If you go and become one flesh with someone who is not your wife or your husband, then you are bringing Christ himself into the crime, because you are a member of his body. And Paul says, shall I make Christ? Shall I join the members of Christ with a harlot? So you see, it is a crime against God. And you know, when we teach our little daughters and little sons, especially when they become teenagers, that they shouldn't go fooling around with sex.

A lot of times we give them all the wrong reasons. We give them reasons that we think will scare them away from it so often. You know, well, you could become pregnant.

You could get venereal disease. You could get, if it was a case of adultery, you could actually get killed by the jealous spouse. There's all kinds of horrible things can happen to you.

Nonetheless, those things, while they may deter some, are not the real reason that Christians are to avoid those things. It's not because of any consequences that might accrue to ourselves because we do it. It's because we do not possess ourselves.

Paul says, you are not your own. You've been bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God

with your body and with your spirit, which are his.

So it's not because of unwanted pregnancies that may occur or the threat of venereal disease or any other thing like that or the breaking of someone's heart. Those aren't the reasons that we're to avoid those things. It's because we're not supposed to break God's heart.

We're not supposed to defile his temple. We are not our own. Our bodies belong to him.

And that is why we must abstain from fornication and from adultery. It's a crime against marriage. It's a crime against God.

It's also a crime against yourself. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 6, 18, all other sins are outside the body, but he that commits fornication sins against his own body. And, of course, that may be a reference to venereal disease.

It is possible. Certainly, we know that the AIDS and the herpes epidemics in recent times, which are in the near enough past. Actually, I guess they still continue, but we used to hear more about them a year or so ago.

They are sufficient reminder that those who indulge in sexual misconduct risk damaging their own bodies, perhaps irreparably. It's also against your own reputation. The Bible says concerning the adulterer in Proverbs 6, a wound and dishonor shall he get.

Once a man is known to be an adulterer, his reputation is shot. Very hard to get it back. It's a sin against your own finances.

Adultery is expensive. When you're trying to court someone who isn't your wife, it takes money. It says concerning the prodigal son that he took all of his living, all of his inheritance from his father, and he spent it all on harlots and loose living.

So, it's a sin against your own pocketbook, as well as a sin against your body and your reputation. And also, it's a sin against your own soul. Because the Bible says that those who commit fornication and those who are adulterers and those who are lascivious shall not inherit the kingdom of God, but shall be cast alive into the lake, burning with fire and brimstone.

So, there's sufficient reason to see the crime that adultery is. And the one commandment, thou shalt not commit adultery, I said last week, condemns all sexual misconduct, whether it's bestiality or homosexuality or fornication or incest or adultery. All these things are included in the one commandment because lust is the common fountainhead of all of them.

And lust is a perversion of love. And God, when he created man and woman and made them come together to procreate and to live together, intended for their relationship to

be one of love. One that actually mimics and portrays to the world the relationship between Christ and the church.

But all sexual misconduct is the product of lust, which is a degraded form of love. And it's not love for your partner, it's love for self. And because all these things spring from lust, they are all cousins, they are all related to each other.

And all of them, in Leviticus chapter 20, are condemned with the same penalty, death. And Jesus indicated that the real problem behind adultery is lust after all. He said in Matthew chapter 5, You've heard that it has been said, thou shalt not commit adultery.

But I say unto you that he that looks on a woman to lust after her commits adultery, has committed adultery with her already in his heart. And we talked finally last week, before we closed the meeting, about mental adultery. How that mental adultery occurs when we give in to temptation.

It does not occur necessarily when we experience temptation, because temptation is not sin. Jesus was tempted, the Bible says, in all points like as we are, yet without sin. To be tempted is not the same thing as to sin.

But sin occurs, as James says, when lust hath conceived it brings forth sin. And sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. You lust, meaning you desire something, and when it conceives it becomes sin.

Well, how does lust conceive? I believe that refers to when your will says yes to that desire. For a desire to arise in your heart is not necessarily to have committed adultery in your heart. But when your heart agrees with that desire and says yes, that's when you have committed mental adultery.

And Jesus indicated that the penalty for it will be just as great as if you committed physical adultery. Some people have falsely reasoned, well, I've already committed mental adultery, I might as well go all the way and do the rest, it's all the same, isn't it? But it's not all the same. It's true that you can be thrown into hell for mental adultery, but if you commit the act, then you've committed the sin in a second way.

And I'll tell you a little later why that's so dangerous to reason that way. I mentioned that those who allow themselves to indulge in mental adultery, and there are many who do, whether through pornography, reading the girly magazines, or I recently, I know a man in town who's got a problem, he's a peeping Tom. And people who indulge in this kind of mental adultery are people who think that they're getting away with something, but in fact, the devil is making a mockery of them.

It's the devil who's dominating them. Their desires are completely controlled by his suggestions. And yet, the irony is they're only tormenting themselves.

When you allow yourself to fantasize concerning a sexual relationship that you do not intend to grant yourself, you're only creating a burning, as Paul spoke of it when he said, it's better to marry than to burn. To have unfulfilled desires is to burn, especially sexual desires. The Bible said, can a man take hot coals into his bosom and his clothes not be burned? Sexual desire is like a burning fire.

And when a person allows that burning to take place in his heart, though he never intends to fulfill it, he is only allowing himself to experience hell early. He's allowing himself to, in fact, he's inviting that burning of unfulfilled desire to dominate his character and his personality, which will be his ultimate fate when he's thrown into the lake of fire and will burn forever with such unfulfilled desires. And I can't imagine why people feel they're getting away with something when they create hell for themselves early.

But that is the nature of mental adultery. And the last thing I said last week before we closed was that it is possible for us to be guilty of creating mental adultery in others, or at least of tempting them, of stumbling them with it. It may be that you're not fantasizing in your mind about someone, but if you are dressing in such a way or behaving in such a way or talking in such a way that causes another person to begin to fantasize, then you are guilty just as much of committing the act.

Because if you offer poison to a person and they reject it, even if they don't commit the act themselves, you're just as guilty as if they had taken it. You've still offered them the poison. And when a woman or a man dresses in such a way which is designed especially to elicit the attention of the opposite sex, in our day where we have a highly sensual society, where all the advertisements and all the media are promoting a very sexual orientation of thinking so that people lust at the drop of a hat or at the slightest suggestion, anything that we do that might inspire lust in another person is offering them the poison of temptation.

And we become as guilty as they if we are the cause of their fantasies. Well, now I wanted to talk, and this will be our final portion, about how we may avoid this sin. That certainly is what we need to know.

I hope that you're satisfied that this is something that needs to be avoided. And yet, you know, many of you no doubt listening to last week's study were saying, yes, yes, I agree, I agree, I agree, but how do I get over this thing? And I hope it wasn't a frustration to you that I put off this part of the study until this week, but we will look at several things the Word of God has to say about overcoming adulterous, lustful domination of our souls by this evil thing. The first thing that the Bible says about how to overcome this is that a man or a woman should have a wholehearted and entire love for their spouse.

They say, well, I don't have a spouse. Well, then, if you can contain yourself, that's well and good. If you can't contain yourself, the Bible has command for you.

Get married. Now, some women especially would say, well, that's easier said than done. But, you know, we have in our society a mentality about marriage that was very foreign to the Greek and Roman and even the Jewish mentality in Bible times.

In those days, a lot of times marriages were arranged by parents. I'm not saying that's the way it should be done today, but I'm just saying that's the way it always was and still is in many societies today. Marriages were arranged by parents.

A lot of times a bride and a bridegroom would not even really get to know each other or meet each other until the wedding. And it's obvious that marriages were contracted on a basis other than infatuation or physical attraction in those days. Marriage was considered to be something that had utility, that was functional.

It was good. It helped, of course, to promote the race. It was good for reproduction.

It was a means of perpetuating the family name. Those are the things that people were concerned with in old days, in the Bible days. Now, I'm sure that men would, in those days, just as much as now, like to have a wife that they found attractive and pleasant to be with and all.

And the same with the women. But that wasn't just something that they assumed that they'd get. In our society, people marry, they say, for love.

It's interesting, however, that in our society, one out of every two marriages ends in divorce. Whereas in those ancient societies, divorce hardly ever occurred. You might think that in a society like ours, which feels we have a loftier means of selecting our partners, and where we are more picky about who we would marry, that after being so picky, once we finally made our choice, we'd be happy with such a person all our lives.

But the very fact is that because we have a mentality in general about marriage, that it is something to satisfy our desires, and that's why we insist on having the prettiest or handsomest or richest or most witty or whatever kind of person we can find as our spouse. A lot of times that's why we're not married as early as we'd like to be, because we're holding out for an extremely high standard in some area which is really based more on self-interest than the kingdom of God. And I know because I'm the same way.

But the fact is that in Paul's day, he could simply just say to someone, if you can't contain your sexual urges, just get married. Now, like I said, some people say, well, that's easy to say, but how do you find someone to get married to? Well, in those days, tell your dad to talk to someone else's dad and work it out, you know. And you say, I'd never do that.

Well, that's because you'd rather live with your unfulfilled desires and so forth until you could find something to satisfy yourself, rather than take the scriptural counsel. Now, I'm not saying everyone who has sexual desires should run out and get married quickly. That

can be a real disaster.

In fact, I think what we need to do is try to appropriate every means of grace available, and there are many that we'll talk about tonight, to overcome such sexual desires before we just run off and get married. But at the same time, we have to acknowledge that God has granted that marriage is the antidote to fornication. And where he says that is in 1 Corinthians, chapter 7 and verse 1 and following.

When he says, now concerning the things of which you wrote unto me, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife and let every woman have her own husband. You know, I read some books by, I think Dobson was one of the books that talked about this.

I'm not sure if it was James Dobson who talked about this or someone else. But how that there's much more sexual frustration among teenagers in our society than there was in ancient times for two reasons. One is that children are maturing, sexually maturing at a younger age than they did in previous generations.

I'm not sure why that would be, except perhaps because psychologically they're being stimulated by sexual stimulus from childhood, by the Saturday morning cartoons and the advertisements on TV and all the things they see in the magazines. You know, that even from a young age, they're familiarized with lustful, seductive kind of suggestions. And perhaps that causes them sexually to develop more.

There is some degree in which the mind controls development of the body. I don't know to what degree it does so, but there is apparently a fact that children are sexually maturing at younger ages now than in previous generations. And it's apparently also a fact that people wait longer to get married than they did in former times.

In biblical times, for instance, when a woman reached puberty, she'd get married if she could. And if she couldn't, her father would be out looking to get her married when she was 13 years old or 12 or whatever. That would be when she'd get married.

Now, it's obvious that in our society, where people sometimes wait until they're in their 20s or even their 30s before they get married, that they're going through a long period of adulthood where their sexual drives are fully operative, but without any vent for that sexual drive to find a legitimate fulfillment. And I'm not saying that everyone who's old and single must necessarily go out and get married, because Paul said it's good for a man never to touch a woman. If you've got the power to control your sexual appetites, good for you.

Paul said it's great to be single. You've got a lot less distractions. But I'm talking about if you don't.

If you cannot control your sexual appetites, part of the reason must be either that you're

not married, or if you are married, because sometimes married people have problems with this too, it's because you're not loving your wife or your husband in an entire and wholehearted way. Not only 1 Corinthians tells us that having a wife and having the right kind of relationship with a wife is a good deterrent to sexual sin, Proverbs also mentions that in Proverbs chapter 5, verses 18 and 19, where Solomon is talking to his son about avoiding harlots. He's talking about avoiding sexual sin.

And he says in verse 18, Let thy fountain be blessed. Now in the context for several verses before this, he's talking about a man's sexual activity as being like a fountain of waters. And as it says in verse 15, Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of your own well.

That's talking actually about your sexual relationships with your own marriage partner. And he says in verse 18, Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind in pleasant row.

Let her breast satisfy thee at all times. And be thou ravished always with her love. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, or a prostitute, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? So he's saying, instead of embracing the bosom of a stranger, be ravished with your own wife.

And this, if you're a woman, with your own husband. Ravished in the Hebrew actually speaks of twirling around, spinning around with ecstasy. Now I don't know very many husbands who spin around with ecstasy about their wives after they've been married for about six months.

But that's what they're supposed to be doing, and in fact, it's very clear that even though people did not marry for love particularly, or necessarily in ancient times, nonetheless Paul commanded husbands to love their wives. You see, he didn't say marry someone that you love. He said, love the one you're married to.

You might remember what Stephen Stills said about that. But the fact is, that's exactly what the scripture says, that though you may not have been in love with the person you married, now you are commanded to love them. And you're not only commanded to love them, you're commanded to love them entirely, ravishingly.

To find all your satisfaction with that person. And of course, it's not to be your motive in your sexual life with your marriage partner, to just find your satisfaction. Of course, as a Christian, being like Christ who loved the church, he gave himself for her.

Of course, the husband really should be seeking the satisfaction of his wife, and she his. And I've always believed that there could never be any sexual disharmony as long as both parties are just seeking the other person's pleasure. But that's what the Bible says they should do, in fact.

And if you are married, let me put it this way, if you're not married and you're overcome with sexual desire, you may need to consider very seriously what Paul said. To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and every woman have her own husband. And you might say, well, to get married now, I'd have to marry someone that I'm not really that much in love with.

Well, okay, well, that's your problem. But like I said, people in Bible times didn't always wait until they were in love. They loved who they married because God told them to.

But if you can overcome temptation without getting married, well and good. Paul said that's a good state to be in, single and pure. But it's better to be married to someone you're not even in love with, believe it or not, than to be living in sexual sin.

At least you won't go to hell for living faithfully with a wife that you didn't marry for love. But like I said, regardless of what reasons you married someone for, you must love them. That's what the Bible says to do.

And love is a decision of the will. You decide to love someone. It's not just something that happens to you.

We have a real Hollywood idea of love in our minds many times, where love is just something that hits you, you know. You're walking down the street and you see someone, and suddenly you get glassy-eyed and they get glassy-eyed, and you're both stunned. And in the cartoons, a person twirls around and falls over on the ground and flops around like a fish on the dry ground and stuff.

That's what the media is trying to make us think love is. But obviously, that's nothing more than raw lust. Love is something that you choose.

It's not something that just knocks you over. Love is something that's more mature than that. Love is something where a person decides, I'm going to lay down my life for another person.

Jesus said, Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend. And whether you feel like you're in love, and usually the word in love means infatuated or lust, having a great deal of lust for a person nowadays. You probably should use the word in lust rather than in love because that would be more accurate for the concept.

But whether you feel like you're in love with your partner or not, nonetheless, you can decide, I'm going to lay my life down. I'm going to, even if necessary, put my own happiness aside in order to make this person happy. And you might say, well, that doesn't sound very neat, to lay my happiness aside.

What if I have to do that the rest of my life? Well, it's better to do that than burn in hell. But even so, you'll be surprised if you put your spouse's happiness first, you'd be

surprised how happy you become. There's a book that I haven't read, but I can imagine what it's about.

It's a Christian book called *Do Yourself a Favor, Love Your Wife*. And I'm sure that that's exactly true, that if anyone loves his wife, that if he chooses to be loving and considerate to his wife, that he will be a happy person. And he will find that he has all those sensations that he desires to have.

And so, when the Bible commands a man to love his wife, to be ravished with his wife's love, to let his sexual desires be fully satisfied with his wife, the very fact that it's commanded means it's possible for a person to choose it. God cannot command you to do something that you can't choose to do. That'd be unfair.

It'd be unfair if God told you to jump and take a flying leap at the moon. You know, you can't jump to the moon. It's impossible.

It would be unfair for Him to ask you to do it because you can't do it. But whenever God commands you to do something, you might as well take it as granted that that's a possibility. You can do it.

You can choose it. And when God tells husbands to love their wives, and later on in another passage tells the women to love their husbands, I know a lot of people aren't familiar with that passage. They're only familiar with the passage that women are supposed to submit to their husbands.

But in Titus chapter 2, it says that wives are supposed to love their husbands also. When the Bible commands you to love your partner, then it means it can be done. And if you love your partner, you will not be driven by these sexual desires.

The Bible indicates that marriage, a loving relationship in marriage, is God's antidote to lust and to fornication and to adultery. A person who's committed adultery obviously doesn't love his or her spouse as they should, or they could never do such a thing because it's such an insult and a crime against their spouse. But suppose you're single.

Again, Paul said it's good to remain single. It's good for a man never to touch a woman. How do you do that? Well, Paul said you have to have the gift of it.

He says one has one gift and one has another gift. One has the gift of being married, another has the gift of being single. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 19, some are eunuchs from their mother's womb.

Some are made eunuchs by men, and some make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Eunuchs means, of course, someone who's been castrated, but probably not meaning literally in that case, but one who remains single and celibate. Now, some make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake, but those who

succeed to be celibate as single people must have the gift of singleness, and God gives that to some people.

But perhaps you suppose you don't have it, and yet you don't happen to have a partner right now. What else can you do? Well, the instructions I have to people like that apply also to married people who are having trouble with sexual desires, and by no means is marriage an automatic cure for sensuality. A good marriage is, a right relationship in marriage is, as I said, if you love your wife or your husband as you should, you will not be overcome with adulterous thoughts and so forth.

But many people don't have that kind of love, and so even though they're married, they have all kinds of problems. And there's a lot of other things besides marriage that the Bible says we can do about our sexual lusts and how to overcome them. The first thing that I think is necessary for all Christians and is a very good deterrent to sexual sin is to have the fear of God.

The fear of God, the Bible says in Proverbs 16, verse 6, by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil. Now, someone might say, well, fear of God, that sounds more like an Old Testament concept. In the Old Testament people feared God, in the New Testament we're supposed to love God, right? And perfect love casts out fear, there's no fear in love, so fearing God is not something for this present age.

Jesus demonstrated that we're supposed to love Him only. Well, let me answer that by saying there's only a certain kind of fear that love casts out. And John, who said that statement, said it's the fear that has torment.

There is a fear that torments people and perfect love casts out that kind of fear, but there's a fear of reverence, which a child should always have toward his father, which a subject should always have toward his king, which a slave always has toward his master. It's not a terror, it's not something that keeps him always cringing and always terrified. In fact, if he is rightly related to his parent or his king or his master, he can be quite happy and free in it.

But the fear of God is something that keeps us on the right path. By the fear of God meaning depart from evil. I fear God, but that doesn't mean I'm afraid of God.

But I am afraid, I'll tell you very honestly, to get on God's bad side. And I believe that is a healthy thing to have. In fact, that's the beginning of wisdom.

If you don't have the fear of God, you don't have the beginning or the middle part or the end of wisdom. You don't have any wisdom if you don't at least fear God that much. If you don't fear God enough to be afraid to sin, then you don't have much smarts.

Because God will judge and avenge all sin. And anyone who's wise will fear that judgment. But of course, if we're not living in sin, then even though we have this fear of

God as a gyroscope, keeping us walking the straight and narrow without falling to the right or to the left, we don't live in terror or fear at all.

It's a wholesome thing. Joseph had the fear of God and that's what kept him from falling into sin with Potiphar's wife. You remember in Genesis chapter 39, Potiphar's wife sought to get Joseph to sleep with her.

And many times she tried to coerce him and he always would say no way. And finally she grabbed him by his clothes and tried to force him into her bed and he allowed his jacket or his coat to come off in her hands and he ran out. But he said, how shall I do this thing and do this great sin against God? That's what he said to her when she made her suggestions.

In Genesis 39, he says, how can I do this great sin against God? Now, of course, it would have been a great sin against the woman's husband as well, if Joseph had slept with her, but he was mindful of God. He had the fear of God. He said, listen, it may be that I could get away with this on the human level, but I've got to face God someday.

How can I allow myself to do this great sin against God? We need to realize that God is watching us and there's several things we can call to mind that will keep us in the fear of God all the day long. As the Bible says, we should be. Bernard said that the fear of God is the doorkeeper of the soul.

And what he meant by that is that if you have the fear of God, it will not allow certain things into your mind there because the very thought of them, you'd shudder at the thought of him because you realize how God feels about those things and how he has pledged himself to avenge such things. And there's several things that ought to come to your mind that will bring the fear of God. I remember a time when I was single.

And there was a particular temptation that occurred to me about this one woman from time to time. It kept coming to my mind. And believe it or not, she was a married woman.

And every time the thought would come up, the Lord would send a scripture with it. And it was what John the Baptist said to Herod. It's not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.

And that was enough for me. I'll tell you, I just thought of John the Baptist shaking his finger at Herod there. Saying, it's not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.

And I don't know, for some reason, the thought of John the Baptist always put the fear of God in me. I don't know why that is. But that scripture just kept coming to my mind.

And you know, that's all you need to know. You just need to remind yourself. I heard recently of a little girl, four years old, whom her mother had taught her to resist the devil

and all.

And the little girl walked into a room where there was a cluster of grapes on the table. And she was very tempted to eat them. And she didn't know it, but her mother was watching through the door, watching what she'd do.

And the little girl moved closer and closer to the grapes. And she was obviously lusting after those grapes and desiring to take some. Yet she knew that they weren't hers and that she shouldn't do it.

And she was going through a real visible struggle. But the mother said, after just a few seconds, the little girl said, Get thee behind me, Satan, for it is written, thou shalt not steal. And she ran out of the room.

That was just a four-year-old girl who did that. That's a true story. And that's the way we resist the devil, to remind ourselves what God said.

When you have an adulterous thought come to your mind, say, It's not lawful for you to have your brother's wife. That's what the Lord said. That's what John the Baptist, the prophet, said to Herod.

And you can say, Satan, it is written. That's how we do spiritual warfare, by quoting scripture. That's how Jesus did it when he was in the wilderness being tempted.

He said, It is written, man shall not live by bread alone. It is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord God, and Him only shalt thou serve.

Every time there was a temptation, He brought up the scriptures. Because the scriptures reminded Him of what God demands. And once you're reminded, once you've got God's demands in your minds, then it reminds you that you are not at liberty to violate His demands.

It's when we forget the law of God, and we forget that He is the judge and the enforcer of His own law, that we fail to have the fear of God about doing certain things that are against His law. But if we remind ourselves of what He said, It is written, thou shalt not commit adultery. It is written, it is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife.

It is written that the body is not for fornication. It is written that every one of you must learn to possess His vessel of sanctification and honor. I'll tell you, some of those ones are good ones to bring up.

Because it puts the fear of God in you. Wait a minute, my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Whoever defiles the temple of the Holy Spirit, God will judge, it says in 1 Corinthians 3. I don't want to get judged by God for defiling His temple.

It puts the fear of God in me to remember those scriptures. There's a couple of Old Testament characters really worthy of remembering in this respect. One is Esau.

I'd like you to look with me at the book of Hebrews. Though Esau, the story of Esau is found in the book of Genesis, but he's remembered in the book of Hebrews, though not in a very positive light. Esau was Jacob's brother.

And Esau was the one who, because he was hungry, sold his birthright for a bowl of lentil soup. Now, his birthright was really something of great value. Not only physical, material value, but spiritual value.

Because in that family, the birthright gave a person a privilege of being in the direct genealogy of the Messiah. And Esau was the firstborn and had the right to be in the genealogy of the Messiah, but he sold that right to Jacob for a bowl of soup, showing how little concern Esau had for spiritual things and what a great concern he had for satisfying his temporal desires. But he's remembered in Hebrews chapter 12, and it says about him, in verses 15 through 17, looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled, lest there be any fornicator or profane person as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. What the writer says here is that we ought to remember Esau, how foolish he was. He threw away his whole spiritual inheritance to satisfy his lusts on one occasion.

It says, lest there should be any fornicator or profane person like Esau. The Bible doesn't record that Esau was a fornicator. It only records that he was a man whose satisfaction of his own lusts were more important to him at any given moment than his spiritual future, his destiny.

And I'm sure, well, probably, you know how it is when you're fasting, how everything looks delicious. The Bible says, the full soul loatheth the honeycomb, but to the hungry every bitter thing is sweet. And if you're hungry, it seems like everything looks good.

It's a good time to eat, you know, those good-for-you things that you never liked, because they even seemed good at the time. And Esau was quite hungry, and that bland lentil soup must have looked really good to him at the moment. But you know how it is when you break a fast.

I hope you know, if you've ever fasted. When you break a fast, after you've had just one meal, the hunger is totally gone, and you just wonder why that thing seemed to be so alluring. Because once that hunger, the edge has been taken off of it, suddenly you're just back to normal, and you can't figure out why you were so attracted to that thing at

the time.

And why you're willing, in Esau's case, I'm sure that after he'd had that bowl of soup, he thought, now, why was it so important for me to eat that and throw off my whole inheritance for it? Yet that's exactly what we do whenever we succumb to sexual temptation. At the time, it seems so alluring. At the time, it seems like the sacrifice of everything would be worth it for the satisfaction of our lusts at that moment.

But if you have ever indulged, I think you can testify that after you've indulged, you wonder why you considered it. At this point, the cassette tape was stopped and turned over to record on the second side. So worth throwing away your spiritual walk with God for.

Because it's just like eating food. All the lusts of the flesh are in the same category, really. Lusts for food or lusts for sex, they're very closely related.

And they are all very deceptive. When you're hungry, everything looks good. But once you've eaten it, you say, it wasn't that great.

And there's a case in the Bible. A man named Amnon, who was one of David's sons, was in lust with his half-sister, a woman named Tamar. And the Bible records how that he, through the advice of another person, devised a plot where he would fake sickness.

And he'd request that Tamar would bring him his food in bed. And at a certain time, she brought him his food. He made sure everyone was out of the room.

And the Bible says he pulled her into bed and he forced his intentions upon her and raped her. And the interesting thing is that before he did this, the Bible says he loved her so much, he just couldn't resist her. But it says as soon as he had done this, it says his hatred for her was greater than his love for her formerly had been.

I'm not saying in every case where sexual sin is committed that that kind of a black and white thing takes place. But it's an interesting phenomenon that something can seem so wonderful and so appealing and so glorious while you're tempted to do it. But as soon as you've done it, suddenly you think, what was the attraction? And especially if you paid some great price to satisfy that desire, like the throwing away of your walk with God.

Now you say, well, wait a minute, you don't throw away your walk with God just when you commit a sexual sin. Can't you always repent? And doesn't God restore you? Well, concerning Esau, it says later when he wanted the blessing, he was rejected and he found no place of repentance, though he sought for it carefully with tears. You can't just repent any time you want to.

Repentance is something that God grants when he sees fit. And if he doesn't grant repentance, you can't repent. It's not such an easy thing to say, well, I'll just sin and

repent and then I'll be saved.

I'll have my cake and eat it, too. You sin, true enough, you've got to repent. But God doesn't guarantee that he's always going to grant you repentance every time you sin.

It's true that if your heart is right toward him and if you fear God and if you're doing your best to avoid all known sin, he will honor that. And if you fall into sin because the spirit is willing and the flesh is weak, he will certainly grant repentance on occasions like that because he sees the intention of your heart. But if you're trying to manipulate God, if you're trying to say, well, I'm going to have my sexual gratification in illicit ways and still somehow get my salvation out of it, God is not mocked.

The Bible says, don't be deceived. Whatsoever man sows, that shall he also reap. The fear of God is a very realistic thing to have, and it's something that by it men depart from evil.

When you are tempted to sin, fear God. When you're tempted with lust, let the fear of God be stronger in you than the lust. Now, how do you do that? As I said, it helps a great deal to reflect on the law of God and to reflect on the judgment, the righteous judgment of God, which he said he will do.

There's another Old Testament character besides Esau who is very instructive to us in this, and that's David. In 2 Samuel chapter 12, I'd like you to turn there. This is right after David had committed his sexual sin with Bathsheba.

You might remember the story. The woman's husband was out on the battlefield. She lived next door to David.

She was out bathing on a rooftop in full view of where he was. He was out on his rooftop walking around, saw her out there, and he called for her, brought her over and got her pregnant. Then he had her husband killed.

Tremendous sin in David's life. But he repented. God, in that case, granted him repentance and forgave him his sin.

However, there was a price to pay for it, as we can see in 2 Samuel chapter 12, verses 9 through 11. This is what the prophet Nathan said to David. Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord to do evil in his sight? Thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite, which was Bathsheba's husband, with a sword and has taken his wife to be thy wife and has slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon.

Now, therefore, the sword shall never depart from thine house, because thou hast despised me and has taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house, and I will take up thy wives before thine eyes and give them unto thy neighbor, and he shall lie with thy

wives in the sight of the sun. Now, what's being said here is that though God forgave David for this sin and David still came out of it a saved person, yet this sin had serious consequences that David would never be able to shake off.

The sword would never depart from his house, and just reading David's subsequent history tells you what that means. His house was full of strife and intrigue. Amnon, as I said, raped his daughter, Tamar.

Tamar's brother Absalom killed Amnon for it, killed his brother. Later on, Absalom, another son of David, rose up against David and had to be killed. Later on, another son of David, Adonijah, tried to make himself king in Solomon's place, but Solomon was made king, and then Adonijah was afraid Solomon would kill him.

Solomon said, If he behaves himself, I won't kill you. But then later on, the man made a request that Solomon saw as a real bad thing, and there was another retaliation that took place. The sword never departed from David's house.

It's an interesting thing when you read the life of David. Up till the time he sinned with Bathsheba, it's a glorious, glorious life that you read about. A life where God's delivering him on every side from all his enemies.

A life where he is the sweetheart of Israel. Everyone loves him. He's the great beloved king.

But after this sin with Bathsheba, though we can expect to see David in heaven, I'm sure, yet his earthly lot and the stream of his life was fouled irreparably. And there are great consequences that one must pay for sexual sin. For any sin.

But certainly when it comes to adultery, there are long-range consequences that are very, in most cases, they never go away. In fact, most of you can testify that if you happen to go to a movie once that you didn't know was going to be so graphic in sexual matters as it turned out to be, and if you happen to see certain graphic sexual things done on the screen, that ever since then the devil has had an opportunity to bring those things back up to your mind. Now, if you haven't had that experience, more power to you.

But I know I have, and I have a feeling most of you have, that you've had either deliberately or against your will, you've been exposed. Your eyes have seen things that you wish they'd never seen. And I can think of things that I saw by accident over 15 years ago, which when the devil wants to, he can bring them back to my mind as a temptation, as something to remember.

You know, it doesn't take very long for a shutter to be open on a camera to make a permanent impression on the film inside. It can be a fraction of a second. And so also, just a little indulgence in sexual lust, just allowing a little bit of temptation to go into the

eye and to hold it in there, can be something that you have a hard time ever getting rid of, or maybe never get rid of out of your mind.

It can always come back up to torment you. It doesn't mean that God doesn't forgive you, but it certainly can mean that it'll be a problem to you the rest of your life. The fear of God involves the fear of the consequences of sin.

When we think of the, when we're tempted to sin, to think of the consequences that God has warned us about. His righteous judgment on sin. It's something that cannot be avoided by those who deliberately live in sin.

Remember Esau, remember David. It says in Proverbs chapter 5, in that same passage we were looking at a moment ago, where Solomon's telling his son to avoid adultery. And he, we already read verse 20 where it says, and why wilt thou my son be ravished with a strange woman and embrace the bosom of a stranger? He says in the next verse, verse 21, for the ways of a man are before the eyes of the Lord and he pondereth all his goings.

In other words, the Lord's watching you all the time. Why should he behold you ravishing the breasts of a strange woman? Solomon says to his son, if you really have a sense of the presence of God and of the righteous judgment of God against sin, the fear of God will reign and you will be able to depart from evil. If you remember that God is watching you.

At the time when you allow yourself to entertain sexual thoughts, generally you have to forget for the moment that God is watching those thoughts. Or else you won't feel very comfortable with them. Because the awareness that God's eyes are upon the righteous and his face is set against those that do evil and that he sees all is something that should put the fear of God in you whenever you're tempted to sin in this way.

And that's what Solomon used to talk to his son about it. He said, now, stay away from those girls because God's watching every move you make. Also, in Hebrews 13, 4, concerning the fear of God on this particular thing.

It says marriage is honorable and all in the bed is undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. God has pledged that he will judge adulterers and whoremongers. Whoremongers, of course, are people who use prostitutes or who are involved in fornication or adultery.

God has said that marriage is an honorable thing. Sexual relations in marriage is honorable. The bed is undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God has promised he will judge.

And that should put the fear of God in you. And another and perhaps final thing on this matter of fearing God and therefore running from sin is the realization that sin traps you.

Sin is not just something that that allures you and then gives you some pleasure.

You know, we have to understand what sin is. Sin, sinful desire, I should say, pleasure, sinful pleasure is the bait on the devil's hook. I believe the devil would gladly not give us any pleasure at all if we would sin without it.

But I think that because most of us wouldn't sin if it wasn't pleasurable to sin. Satan reluctantly allows sin to be pleasurable. I think pleasure is something God invented.

It's not something satanic. A lot of people think that pleasure is evil. The Bible says in Psalm 16 concerning God in thy right hand are pleasures forevermore.

I believe God's the one who created pleasure. I don't think the devil even likes pleasure, but I believe the reason he gives pleasure, allows sin to be pleasurable is because that's the only way he can get people hooked on sin. And the pleasures of sin are for a season, it says in Hebrews 11, but sin does not exist for the sake of pleasure.

Sin is a trap. The pleasure is the bait. And very few people who get involved in sexual sin ever escape from that trap.

It's just a fact of history. Those who allow themselves, it says in Proverbs, those who go down to a harlot's house, few ever return out of it. Because once you break down in that area, it's hard to ever escape.

I was talking to, in fact, the pastor of our Australian students here, the Australian pastor, Les Hanson, who will be here in a few weeks teaching us. I was talking to him last year, and we were talking with another brother who had some serious problems in his sexual life. And I was just listening in because I was fascinated to hear what Les had to say, but they were talking about why it is that it's so hard to get over.

In this case, there was a brother who had a problem with masturbation. And, you know, you'd think that'd be just an easy thing to get over, as easy as getting over some other kind of a sin. But what Les was saying really, I believe, was true.

He said that the reason sexual sin is so hard to get over is because sex is such a holy thing. Sex is something that God made just for a holy relationship between a husband and a wife, that it has to be guarded with very strong walls. Because God really guards those things that are really holy.

And in order for someone to break through those walls and break down those walls requires that they have a determination to basically throw away that purity and throw away that holiness. And once a person has done that in their early life by becoming sexually active outside of marriage, that those walls are broken down. And they're very thick walls, and it's very difficult to build them back up.

And whether that explanation is true or not, I can't be sure. But I know this, that there's probably hardly any other area of sin that is harder to recover from than sexual sin. It's possible, for instance, for you to steal something.

I remember when I was a little child, I stole a few things. But it never really became a way of life. But very seldom does a person get involved at a young age or any age in sexual activity and then be able to just walk away from it and never do it again.

In my case, I was a virgin when I got married the first time. And when that marriage ended, I remember that the desires that I had as a single person, divorced, were so much stronger than the desires I had even as a teenager. You know, people think of teenagers being the ones who have the really strong sexual desires.

But my sexual desires as a teenager were nowhere near as difficult to manage as after my marriage broke up, when I was a little older. But the reason, of course, is because I had already become sexually active in marriage. And as a teenager, I had refrained from it, and therefore, I'd never really broken down those walls.

But it became something very, well, I'm sure everyone here knows how hard it is to manage sexual desires. But I'm saying that it wasn't really that big a problem to me until after I'd been married. Because if you don't break those walls down, it's not all that hard to remain pure.

There's temptation, of course. But once you break it down, it's hard to get away. It says in Proverbs that those who go into the harlot's house, few ever escape from it.

In Ecclesiastes chapter 7, there's a description of a harlot, also of an adulterous woman, and the hold that she gets on a person who begins to patronize her. Ecclesiastes chapter 7 and verse 26, it says, And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands are like bands. Whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be taken by her.

He describes the woman who is like a snare and like a net, and her hands are like bands, which means chains, at fetters. And he says, only those who please God will escape from her, but the sinner will be taken by her. Once you get involved in sexual sin, it's not an easy matter.

You reason in yourself, actually, it's the devil who lies to you about it. He says, if you commit this sin, you can just repent and then everything will be back to normal. You know how God forgives.

And if you fall for that lie, you're going to be real disappointed. Because every time you commit a sexual sin, you establish a pattern which is almost impossible, ultimately, to break. The only way you can break it, really, is by the grace of God.

And if you're not seeking to please God, if you're not walking in the fear of God, then the grace of God won't be available in the same way for you to really overcome it. You need to depart from iniquity. You need to fear God and run from sin, just like Joseph ran from Potiphar's wife.

Paul said, Flee youthful lusts. Why? Because the fear of God should cause you to do so. Once you get involved in sexual sin, you're not likely to escape from it any time soon.

Unless you really have a close walk with the Lord and you're really trusting Him moment by moment. In 2 Peter, there's a reference to some people who were in the church, whom he does not consider to be true Christians, but he gives a description of them. 2 Peter 2, verse 14, describes them as having eyes full of adultery and that cannot cease from sin.

Men whose eyes are full of adultery and who are incapable of ceasing from sin. Because, of course, they're allowing their eyes to be full of adultery, they get trapped and they can't cease from it. Plutarch spoke of the Persian kings as being captives of their concubines, because the men were so sensuous that they couldn't get away from their concubines, which were, of course, their mistresses.

So they were described as being captives of their concubines. So the fear of God, which means, of course, fearing the judgment of God and fearing the consequences that God has said will come to us for sin, should be a major attitude in our lives. And it is one of the few attitudes that has a direct relationship on countering sexual temptation.

Because when we're tempted with sexual things, at the time, hardly anything seems more important. Hardly any sacrifice seems too great to make for that acquisition, for that conquest. Just like Esau was willing to give up his birthright to satisfy his lust on one moment.

And that's the way that temptation towards sex often hits us. It just seems like nothing's more important. The only thing that'll stop you, usually, is not going to be thinking, well, you know, there could be an unwanted pregnancy or there could be venereal disease.

Those kind of considerations usually are swept right away as being relatively insignificant. The only thing that really matters in a case like that is the fear of God. And that is a very necessary attitude, whether you have particular problems in the area of sexual temptation or in other areas, the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom, and certainly every Christian ought to walk in it.

And it's not an Old Testament concept only. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5, Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. Paul said he was familiar with the terror of the Lord, and he used that, or actually, it's because of his familiarity with the terror of the Lord that he was so actively persuading men to repent.

Jesus said, don't fear them that can kill the body and afterward can do no more, but fear him, who after he has killed the body can also cast the soul into hell. That's certainly a command from Jesus, that we should fear God. And the Bible certainly teaches that in both the Old and the New Testament.

Okay, besides the fear of God, we've talked about marriage is given to us by God as a deterrent to sexual sin. Also, the fear of God is a great deterrent against adultery and sexual sin. Another thing, very specifically, that we're told to do is to pray against it.

We should pray against this sin, even as we pray against all sin, but in Psalm 51, where David was repenting, really, for his sin with Bathsheba, which was a sexual sin, one thing he prayed in that prayer in Psalm 51.10 was, Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Certainly that was the reason why he had fallen before. He had failed to keep his heart clean and his spirit right.

And he didn't want to make that mistake again. He said, now God, please create a clean heart in me. By prayer, we can gain God's grace to have a clean heart and a right spirit.

Jesus said, when you pray, pray like this. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. That's part of our prayer.

That's part of the prayer we're supposed to be praying regularly. Jesus said, when you pray, pray this way. One of the major points of that brief prayer that we're to be praying for is deliverance out of the hand of our enemy, Satan.

To pray that God will specifically lead us out of temptation and deliver us from the snares that the devil lays for us. If you have trouble with temptation, you should make your first recourse, be it through prayer. To fall down right on your knees where you are, if you're able to do so, or find a private place and just fall down and pray and say, God, create a clean heart in me.

Lead me not into temptation. Deliver me from the evil one. Get me out of this.

Jesus said to the disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane, Watch and pray, lest ye fall into temptation. Prayer is given to us against temptation. Christians have not learned how to use prayer very much, or very few Christians even know what prayer is for.

A lot of people don't believe much in prayer, although they do it as a religious action. Yet, prayer is supposed to be a vital connection we have to God, through which the blessings of God flow to us and to others in order to accomplish His desired ends, His purposes. One of His desired ends is that we should live a holy life.

Therefore, we can feel quite confident that if we pray toward that end, that we are praying according to His will. And it says in 1 John 5.14, This is the confidence that we have in Him that if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us. And if we know that He heareth us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.

So, to pray against temptation is to pray according to the will of God, and we can have confidence that He hears and answers such prayers as that. So, prayer. Use prayer.

That is a weapon. The Bible tells us that it is one of our weapons against temptation. Another thing that will be very good for you as far as overcoming a chronic problem with sexual temptation is to take delight in the Word of God.

In Psalm 119, in verse 103, it says, David and the psalmists often use honey as a sample or a representative of things that satisfy the physical appetites or the physical desires. As in, for instance, Psalm 19, where he talks about the Word of God being more to be desired than gold and sweeter also than the honey in the honeycomb. He's saying that the Word of God is more delightful and more to be desired than gold, which is riches, which motivates some people, and honey, which has to do with satisfying your fleshly desires, of which sex would be one of them.

But here he says, If you develop a taste for the Word of God, it will help keep you out of trouble in areas of uncleanness. It says in verse 9 of the same psalm, 119, verse 9, By taking heed thereto according to thy word. Take delight in the Word of God.

Take heed to the Word of God. In only a couple of verses later, in verse 11, it says, Hide the Word of God in your heart. And that doesn't only mean memorize it.

Of course, memorizing it is important. The reason Jesus was able to say, It is written, whenever the devil tempted him, was because he had scriptures memorized that he could bring up. But hiding the Word in your heart means much more than memorizing it.

He doesn't say, Hide the Word in your... I've hidden the Word in my mind. The heart is considered in the Bible to be the center of all the soul's activity, the seat of the will and of the desires. And he's saying, I have allowed your word to saturate my innermost being and to permeate to the very core of my decision-making processes and my desires, and it has affected every aspect of my life.

Now, it's amazing how Christians feel they can get along without Bible reading. In my day, I talk like an old man, but it's amazing how things have changed since I was young, even though I'm still not very old. As a young Baptist, I'll tell you, one thing we always knew is you have to read the Bible to live a successful Christian life.

There's just no question about it. And in the Jesus movement, which was not so long ago, about 15 years ago, that was well understood also, the value of the Word of God and the

merits of the Word of God as a deterrent to sin and as a source of spiritual nourishment and growth. No one questioned it.

It was understood. That's why the movement flourished so well. But nowadays, I'd hate to ask for a show of hands of anyone who spends a half hour a day reading the Word of God.

It'd probably be too shameful. Now, I know my students do, because they have to. Whether they still do after they're out of school will remain to be seen.

But I will say the average Christian has neglected the Word of God perhaps even more than prayer. Though both these things are vital to our success as Christians, and no wonder, it's no wonder at all that you may have trouble with lust when you spend more time watching lust-provoking entertainment than you spend in the Word of God cleaning your mind out. I once was in a church wherein on the Sunday evening service they had two full-length Bible studies, sometimes an hour and a half each.

Now, my studies here are often about an hour and a half. You probably think they're pretty long sometimes. But in this church, on Sunday nights, we'd have a long time of worship, then we'd have a full-length Bible study.

Then after that, there'd be another full-length Bible study. I'm not sure why they did it, but I remember one occasion when I was getting up to give the second one. No, I'm sorry, I gave the first one, and then another man was going to get up and give the second one.

It was getting kind of late, and the pastor was kind of wondering whether we ought to stay for the other one. People were kind of saying, no, let's go home and all that stuff. I remember how on that one occasion I just got so angry with the congregation because I knew that they would sit for three or four hours and watch the television set, but they were complaining about having to sit for three hours and listen to the Word of God.

What mamby-pamby spiritual midgets the church is full of, people who cannot stand to hear the Word of God for several hours. When Paul preached, he preached until midnight. If someone fell asleep, fell to their death, or quite an interruption in the meeting, he went down, raised them from the dead, and then preached until dawn.

You know, when I travel to areas where Bible teachers are less common, here in America we have a lot of Bible teachers, but when I travel to other countries, you know, there are people who are willing to sit for hours and hours and hours and listen to the Word of God because they don't have Bible teachers there. I've heard missionaries tell me that there are parts of Africa, not in the jungles necessarily, but in just villages that are not accustomed to having preachers, where the missionary can go and people will come a full day's walk to sit and listen to the Bible teaching, and they'll want the guy to talk all

day long. They don't want to have him stop because they're so hungry for the Word of God.

Yet in our society, we consider it a great sacrifice to sit and listen if the sermon runs over 20 minutes or 30. And yet we'll go and we'll seek entertainment, many times of the lowliest and most carnal sort, and fill our minds with that for hours upon end. And then we wonder why it is that our minds are tormented with lust.

Why we can't shake temptation out of our minds in these areas. The Bible says, Whatsoever man soweth, that shall he also reap. You're sowing into your mind all day long carnal things.

You're going to reap of the flesh, corruption. But if you sow spiritual seed, then there will be a spiritual product. And if you sow the Word of God, Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.

If you take delight in the Word of God, then you'll be successful. If you don't, you will not be. I can guarantee it.

Now you might say, Well, you don't know me. I haven't really read the Bible much in the past year or so, but I haven't committed adultery. Maybe not, but you haven't flourished as a Christian either.

I can guarantee you that. The Bible says that the one who is like a tree planted by rivers of water, who brings forth his fruit in his season and his leaf never withers, is the man who's meditating day and night on the Word of God. And if you want to gain victory, you need to learn how to pray against temptation.

You need to learn how to saturate your mind with the Word of God. But not only for academic reasons. You know, I have a tendency to read and read and read and read, sometimes just for a thirst for knowledge, which is not bad, you know, because it's knowledge of good things I want.

But that's not even what's a deterrent against sin. The Pharisees had that kind of thirst for knowledge. They read the Scriptures all day long, I'm sure.

But they were just as bad sinners as anyone else in society. And I know myself that I can spend several hours in an academic kind of study of the Word of God, just getting the facts, and I can be really fascinated with what I'm reading, but walk out and have all kinds of trouble with temptation, you know, the next minute. And it's because it's not a matter of filling the mind only with the Word of God.

It has to be something where you savor the Word of God, where you eat the Word, where you allow it to become your spiritual strength and nutrition. And that requires meditating, that requires setting your affections on it. It requires waiting on God with a

passage before you and saying, God, speak to me, what are you trying to say, and taking it slowly sometimes.

But in the absence of this, we will not have our spiritual lives victorious over sexual temptation or other kinds. So that's one thing we certainly can do and we're commanded to do also to help avoid that temptation, and that is to take pleasure in God's Word. Finally, there are certain things that you need to avoid.

If you want to get over your sexual temptations, I'm not telling you you're going to get rid of sexual temptation. No way. The Bible indicates we're going to be tempted as long as we live.

Jesus was tempted, and we can be sure He was tempted with sexual temptation, since the Bible says He was tempted in all points like we are. There's no escaping temptation until we die. But I'm talking about, there's such a thing as having temptations, and there's another thing of being totally dominated by tempting thoughts.

We all will have times when temptation comes, but if you're spiritually healthy and use the resources of grace that God has given you, you can deflect temptation just simply. The shield of faith, Paul said, you'll be able to deflect every fiery dart of the wicked one. You won't necessarily avoid being shot at, but you'll be safe.

And if you want to get over, if you feel like you haven't really been that safe from temptations, these are things that the Bible tells you you can do. And one thing you're going to necessarily do is avoid certain things. One thing you've got to avoid is lewd company.

In Proverbs 5.8, Solomon tells his son concerning the harlots, keep far from the door of her house. Steer a wide course around her neighborhood. Stay out of that kind of company.

You go near there, you're just asking for trouble. There are certain kinds of people who work with you, or maybe go to school with you, or maybe even go to church with you, whose speech is so unedifying, and who are constantly talking about things that express their own slavery to lust, and which call graphic images to your mind when you hear it, that you just know that it's no good spending time with such people. And you need to avoid evil company, because evil company corrupts good manners, the Bible says.

The Bible says, he that walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will come to destruction. If you hang out with foolish people, you're going to be like them. And so, avoid lewd company.

Avoid tempting sights. Job said, in Job 31.1, I've made a covenant with my eyes, why should I look upon a maid? You need to make a covenant with your eyes and say, there are certain things that I know I can't look at safely. If you have to avoid going into certain

stores, because they have all their magazines lined up right where you see them when you walk in, then avoid those stores.

It might be inconvenient to go down the street to go to another store, but do it. Make a covenant with your eyes. I'll tell you, when we think of pornography, as, you know, when we think of magazines that we should avoid looking at, but there's a lot of magazines that aren't called pornography that you should avoid looking at too.

And I don't mind naming some of them. I don't want to seem too prudish. But there's, I'll tell you, there's been some issues of Time magazine that have not been safe to look at the cover of.

Or some of the pictures inside. I don't, someone told me there hasn't been a recent issue of Time magazine that didn't have some kind of a picture in it of a nude body. That's part of their marketing strategy.

Sometimes they have it on the cover, sometimes they have it inside. But, you know, you don't consider that a pornographic magazine. Nonetheless, your lusts don't necessarily, you know, your lusts don't necessarily discern whether it's a pornographic magazine.

There are certain sites that are not healthy for your eyes. They're unfit for Christian consumption. People magazine, Us magazine, all of those gossip magazines, every one of them, every one of them have covers that exploit seductive looks of stars.

And, you know, you might think, well, you know, I'm going to have to bury my head in the sand like an ostrich if I'm going to stay pure. Well, if that's what you have to do to stay pure, it's worth it. Better to let people call you an ostrich than to have God call you a sinner on the Day of Judgment.

Those people are going to be having some fearful things said to them on the Day of Judgment, too, remember. They won't be there to help support you. We need to have the fear of God, we need to make covenant with my eyes.

I have to say, there are certain things that I can't watch. Hardly anything on TV is worth watching. I'm not saying there's nothing on TV that's worth watching, but there's even shows that are decent have regular commercials, and most commercials exploit sex, it's obvious enough.

And I haven't seen a movie in, well, I can't say, there have been a few movies that don't exploit sex recently, and we're always on the lookout for those because we like to once in a while take in a movie if we can find one that's decent. But I'll tell you, PG isn't a safe rating. And a lot of times, G isn't.

You know, it's an amazing thing how numb our society's conscience becomes to sexual perversion. Because, I mean, it's just common knowledge now that there are movies that

are rated R that would have been rated X ten years ago. And probably there's movies that are rated PG that would have not only been rated X but would have been totally banned twenty years ago.

When *Gone with the Wind* came out, it shocked audiences. Nowadays, it doesn't have anything in it that surprises us at all. In fact, we wouldn't even rate it PG, it'd be just for general audiences.

But that's because the conscience of the nation has become numb by much exposure. And you alone know what kinds of sights arouse you. And you need to make a covenant with your eyes to avoid those kinds of sights.

To not go to those places where you know you're likely to see them. And it's a matter of life and death, really. We need to avoid sinful entertainment.

Romans chapter 1 is an interesting commentary on our society. And sadly, it's a commentary on some Christians I've known. Perhaps even me at times.

But when it's talking about the various sins in the world, in Romans 1.32 it says about people who are committing these sins. It says, who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. Now what Paul's saying is that people today, and in his day, even though they knew that God righteously judged certain activities, and that he said that certain things are worthy of death, even knowing that, they still do them and they have pleasure in others who do them.

The fact that we are entertained by movies or magazines or TV shows that feature people doing things that we know God said are worthy of death, means that we fall into this category. People taking pleasure in others who do them. A lot of times we won't do those things ourselves, but we get some kind of a pleasure, vicariously, out of others doing them.

And that's just as bad. Because it means that we love sin, even though we don't have the guts to do it ourselves, because we're afraid of the consequences, nonetheless we love it and seek to get some kind of vicarious thrill from seeing other people do it. We need to avoid another thing that's not directly related to seduction, but it's idleness.

Until about 150 years ago or less, most people had to work all day long to make a living, and six days a week. Nowadays we have 40 hour work weeks, labor unions have made it possible for us to have a lot of leisure time. I'm not saying that's bad, I'm saying it is dangerous.

Not everything that's dangerous is bad in itself, but it does create risks, spiritual risks. Because idleness, well there's an old saying, it's not in the Bible, but it's not a false one either, that the devil finds work for idle hands. He certainly does that.

And if you have a lot of time on your hands, you need to specifically find creative and positive and constructive and spiritual ways to use that time. Because if you don't, if you just sit around and vegetate, the devil will find all kinds of things to use your time for and to put into your mind. We need to keep our minds actively thinking on good things, for instance.

If you have a job where you need to do some kind of work, usually you have to keep your mind on the job and you don't have so much time to be tempted with other things. But if you've got most of your day off the job, and you can just sit around and think about whatever you want to, there's all kinds of opportunity for wrong kinds of thoughts to come in. Therefore, you have to constantly feed the right kind of thoughts into your mind.

That's what Philippians chapter 4 talks about when it says, Whatsoever things are good, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are of good report. Think on these things. We need to constantly and positively be filling our minds with good thoughts.

We need to have no dead air space in our day. We need to not have any idle thought time. Because that's where temptation sneaks in.

If you're constantly filling your mind with thoughts of God and things that edify, there's not going to be much room for temptations to come in. Sometimes they'll come, but they won't find a place there. They'll come and they'll go.

Because you're constantly doing with your mind and with your hands positive things. Idleness creates opportunity for temptation. And there's some scriptures on that, I'm not just making that up.

In 2 Samuel chapter 11, which is where it talks about David sinning with Bathsheba, there's an interesting statement there at the beginning of the chapter. 2 Samuel chapter 11, it says, And it came to pass, after the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel. And they destroyed the children of Ammon and besieged Rabah.

But David tarried still at Jerusalem. And it came to pass in an eventide that David arose from his bed and walked upon the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman washing herself.

And the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent, and so forth. Now, it's interesting, it specifically says, it was the time when kings generally go out to battle.

Namely, they had enemies to conquer. But David had fought a lot of battles. He decided, I'll send Joab this time.

No sense in me busying myself about such things. So he sent Joab and he just stayed home and relaxed. And he was so relaxed one time that he just decided to wander around casually on the roof.

And that's when he felt a temptation. It's in our idleness and in our leisure time, when we're not going out doing the battles, the Lord's battles, I believe, that need to be done. And there's no shortage of battles that need to be won.

There's still a lot of world to be evangelized. There's still a lot of people who've never heard the gospel. There's a lot of battles that need to be won yet.

But when we aren't involved in the Lord's work or in any work, that's when temptation is always a problem. You know, in Colossians chapter 1, I think it is. I only have the King James here, but I think it's the New International Version that makes this really clear.

But in Colossians 1, verses 28 and 29, Paul says, I believe in the New International Version, or one of those new translations, that says something like this. I seek to bring every man into maturity in Christ Jesus, and I use every bit of energy that God gives me toward this end. That is to say, I seek to bring every man into maturity in Christ Jesus, That is to say, as long as he has energy to move and do anything, he uses his energy to help promote the kingdom of God and to edify others and to build them up.

He doesn't have any idle time. If God gives you time off the job, you're still a steward of that time. And you're going to have to give an answer for him how you used it.

And sadly, if we don't use it in constructive ways, we fall prey very often to very unconstructive things, very damaging, tempting things. In Ezekiel chapter 16, verse 49, it says, Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom. Does anyone know why Sodom was destroyed? According to Genesis chapter 19, Sodom was totally given over to homosexuality and sexual perversion.

And certainly that was the sin of Sodom that we remember it for. In Ezekiel 16, verse 49, it says, Behold, this was the sin of the iniquity of thy sister Sodom. Pride and fullness of bread and abundance of idleness was in Sodom.