

The Divine Antidote to Sexual Impurity #1

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Edited transcript of [message](#) preached November 14, 1999

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Many of us are familiar with those words found in Acts 1:8 where the Lord Jesus says to His disciples, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Ten days later, that promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (in the language of Scripture: when that day had fully come). The Lord Jesus Christ sent from heaven the Holy Spirit in power upon the gathered disciples attesting His own role as the Messianic King (for Pentecost was nothing less than that to Jesus) and equipping His disciples to become His witnesses. And as the Gospel went out from Jerusalem and then in the surrounding area of Judea and then up to Samaria, eventually in that first century it did reach what was then understood as the uttermost part of the earth. And as that Gospel penetrated what is commonly called Greco-Roman society in the first century, that is, a society that had been shaped previously by Greek thought and culture, and presently by Roman thought and culture in the light of the Roman conquest of the then known world, it came into a society steeped in the horrible moral degeneration, which is always the handmaiden of idolatry. Some of you, when reading the Old Testament, may wonder why in the world did God have to put the shocking prohibitions in the book of Leviticus and in other segments of Old Testament law warning His people against sins that are so base and so ugly, chapters that we have blushed almost to read in public. Well, it's for the simple reason that those Canaanitish nations in the land into which Israel was to go with the blessing of God, having been steeped for centuries in idolatry, had sunk into the most base and ugly forms of sin and rebellion against God.

When we turn to the New Testament, we find in Romans 1:18-32 a condensed R-rated litany of the kinds of sins that were prevalent in the social fabric of most of the Greco-Roman world. We got a little glimpse of it when we were studying 1 Peter when Peter reminds his readers in chapter 4 verses 3 and 4 of the kind of lifestyle that marked many of them prior to their conversion to Christ. Prominent among those sins that were the handmaiden of the idolatry in Canaan against which God warned His people; prominent among the sins listed in Romans 1:18-32; prominent among the sins in that distilled description of the degeneracy of pagan society in 1 Peter 4 are the sins of sexual impurity. And it is for this reason that the New Testament records specific and repeated instructions on the subject of how the people of God are to maintain sexual purity in the midst of societies that have become a veritable cesspool of sexual impurity and uncleanness. In fact, the social conscience of most of these places where the churches had been established was so battered and distorted and desensitized that when a circular letter was sent out from the apostles at Jerusalem, they had to explicitly forbid the practice of fornication among the churches. Now, if you doubt that, I've given a summary of the other passages, but turn to Acts 15 if you will for a moment. You'll remember that the apostles have gathered together to hear the concern that is voiced by Paul and Barnabas, who while they were ministering in Antioch became aware that some were teaching that you needed to be circumcised and become a kosher Jew to be a full-fledged Christian. And we

read in verse 23 of Acts 15: "Then pleased it the apostles and elders with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barnabas and Silas, chief men among the brethren." These men are going to take back to those churches and other churches the mind of the apostles there at Jerusalem. And this circular letter is going to be delivered to the churches. Read on with me:

"And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. [That's what we might call north of Palestine, moving upward and then over into that section we've come to known as Asia Minor (Turkey now). The Gospel had been spreading out to the uttermost parts of the earth. And now in these churches comprised primarily of Gentiles, this statement is authorized to be normative among the churches.] Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: it seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication [in the list of things that pertained to what we would call matters indifferent, they have to articulate a prohibition against fornication]: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well" (vv. 24-28).

Now, as I was mentioning to two of my fellow elders prior to the service, as a young Christian, I used to read this and be greatly troubled and say to myself, "Lord, it doesn't make sense. Everybody knows that Christians aren't supposed to fornicate." I could not relate to this passage. I believed it; I believed it was the Word of God. I believed the apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit as they thrashed out this whole issue of whether or not Gentiles needed to be circumcised and become kosher Jews in order to be saved. But I simply could not relate to the fact that they felt constrained to add, "You must abstain from fornication." It no longer seems strange to me when I read it. It no longer seems strange, because in a tragic way, the climate of our so-called western civilization has sunk to depths only paralleled by some of those societies against which God was warning His ancient covenant people in many of those prohibitions with respect to some of the basest forms of sexual impurity and uncleanness, the things that Paul listed in Romans 1, and the things the apostles had to address explicitly in 1 Corinthians 5 and 6, 1 Thessalonians 4, Hebrews 13, Romans 13, 1 Peter 2, passage after passage in which explicit directives are given that the people of God are to seek by the grace of God and by the power and dynamics of Gospel grace to maintain sexual purity. But since we have as part of this society that is steeped in neo-paganism and religious apostasy come to days in which the atmosphere around us drips with impurity and uncleanness, and since God says we are not to be conformed to this age (we are not to let the world squeeze us into its mold), but we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds that we may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, and--believe it or not--since it has been 14 and a half years since I addressed the subject of sexual purity in a two or three message series, I've been constrained for several Lord's Day evenings to take up the subject with you, the divine antidote to sexual impurity. And my purpose I trust has been made clear. And I trust none of you have any reservation that it is right and proper to do this. For when we open our Bibles and read the letters which would have been read in the mixed assembly of God's people with children present (1 Corinthians 5 and 6; 1 Thessalonians 4), and when we realize that God mandated under the old covenant that the statute laws be read every so often to the entire congregation of God's people, I trust none of us has a kind of

carnal fastidiousness that makes us feel uncomfortable when these matters are addressed in a Biblical, chaste and God-honoring manner.

Now, in the course of our study, we will be looking at 1 Corinthians 6 and 1 Thessalonians 4 as two of the major passages. But before coming to those passages and the rich instruction they contain in what I'm calling the divine antidote to sexual impurity, I want us to back up and look at the larger context into which those specific words of instruction come to us. Those of you who were with us when I began preaching through 1 Peter 3 will remember, I trust, that before expounding specific roles of male and female, husbands and wives, we backed off and looked at the whole matter of marital roles in the light of the Biblical doctrines of creation, the fall, and redemption. And in a very real sense, that's what I want to do with the subject of the divine antidote to sexual impurity. For when the apostle writes, for example, in 1 Corinthians 6, and he addresses the subject of fornication head-on, and marshals for the people of God a whole spectrum of motives and perspectives to help them stay pure in an impure society, behind, beneath, and around all that Paul says in a way of specific directives is this larger, Biblical context of male and female relationships, our sexuality in the light of creation, fall, and redemption. And so in pursuit of that goal, tonight I want to set down with you on two basic, foundational propositions, propositions that I'm personally convinced are essential to right thinking regarding sexual purity. And remember, it's right thinking that gives birth to right actions.

Proposition number one: our sexuality, including our desire and capacity for sexual pleasure, originates with God and not with the devil. This is the absolute baseline starting point, without which no thinking will end up where it ought to end. Some of you have had the experience of having your mind somewhere else when you went to button up your shirt or button up a dress with 10 or 15 buttons. And so you started and went all the way to the end, and you made a very disrupting discovery. You got the first button in the wrong button hole. And though all the other buttons went into holes, when you got to the end, you found you were one button short or one button too many. You started at the wrong place, and everything you built on that wrong start was out of line. It was skewed. Well, in the same way, when we come to think about the whole question of how can I as a Christian stand in the midst of this moral cesspool and be a pure man, a pure woman, a pure boy, a pure girl in this area of my sexuality, my sexual desires and capacities and appetites. Well, I submit to you that you will not be able to do it unless you start here. Your sexuality and mine, including our desire and capacity for sexual pleasure, originates with God and not the devil. This, of course, takes us right back to Genesis 1 and 2.

Genesis 1 gives us the broad overview of God's creative activity in six days. On that 6th day we read: "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them" (v. 27). Sexual distinctions are an outworking of the mind, will, and wisdom of Almighty God. He is making man in His own image, and He makes that image bearer male and female. And included within the maleness and femaleness were these realities of the capacity for and the desire for sexual pleasure. This is how God made them. Verse 28: "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth...." And as the fruition of their commitment to each other and their engagement in sexual intimacy, they would bare children; they would be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and fulfill their God-given mandate. And when God looks down upon all that He has made--look what it says in verse 31: "And God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." As we shall see as we look at the zoom lens of the creation of man and woman, we back off for a minute now with just Genesis 1 in front of us and see God, as it were, sitting back looking upon the work of His hands, including the creation of man, male

and female with the capacity to be fruitful and to multiply, and with the desire for that relationship that will result in fruitfulness and multiplication, not as some kind of a horrible burden imposed upon them against their nature and against their desire, but with all of the latent sexual capacity and desire and the ability for sexual pleasure, and God looks upon it and says, "It is all very good." And He didn't say, "except this sex business." And you must not say that, and you must not think that.

Come now to Genesis 2, not a contradictory account, but the broad stroke account of Genesis 1 is supplemented with God's account of that crowning work of His creative wisdom and power, the creation of man. After He creates the man, we have more details of how He did that in chapter 2. We read in verse 15: "And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." God took the man He had made and He put him in the circumstance in which he was to accomplish the task assigned to him. Work was not something that came in after the fall. Work was a noble enterprise flowing out of God's creative design and His expressed will for man His image bearer. God was a worker; He makes man in His image to be a worker. He puts him into the garden to dress and to keep it. But now we read in verses 18-20:

"And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him [that is, a help answering to him]. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet [suitable] for him."

No doubt as the various animals were paraded before Adam, and with a mind untainted and uncrippled by sin, he is able to make an analysis of the size and shape and function of that animal. Giving the name was not just giving some kind of a convenient verbal tag. It was identifying the significance of that animal, its significance in contrast to other animals. And Adam names them, but in all of the naming, in all of the analysis of their unique characteristics and functions and their place in God's world, there was nothing in all that Adam surveyed and named that answered peculiarly to his need as a creature made in the image of God. He had eyes to see the animals; the animals could look back maybe with the dumb blank stare of a cow or the intimidating look of a lion. But in the eyes of neither cow nor lion nor any other creature was there that which spoke of a soul and a mind with which Adam could communicate, no helper answering to his need. And whatever the animal was in its muscularity or in its furriness or softness, there was not among all the animals that which Adam would instinctively hold to his bosom as one of his own kind. He's conscious that the animals have sight, and they have hearing, and they have mobility--many characteristics that he as image bearer of God has. But in all of that was no creature that answers to his need. One wonders what kind of language Adam spoke. I don't know. I don't know what kind of language God used when He spoke to Adam--"Adam where are you?" But we can imagine that Adam may have sought to communicate. And he talks to a dumb beast, and the beast may look at him with a blank stare. But there's no language coming back; there's no communication of mind and of soul. And Adam is brought to feel very keenly in the midst of all of the profuseness of God's creative genius, "There's nothing answering to my need." So what does God say? God takes the initiative and says, "It is not good that the man should be alone [alone amidst all the beauty I made; alone amidst all of the animals I made]; I will make him an help meet [or answering to] him." So how does God do it? Verses 21-25:

"And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept [the first incident of anesthesiology in human history]: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. [Now think what this must have meant to Adam. I don't know how many hours he spent with the animals parading by. And he comes to that conviction, there's none of these that answer to my deepest needs, not knowing that God has pronounced it is not good for him to be alone. The next thing he knows is he awakens from a deep sleep and there in front of him--the moment his eyes are cast upon her, he says, 'Aha, there's the one answering to my need.'] This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh [and he doesn't hesitate giving her a name]: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. [She is my counterpart, like me but separate from me. In many ways she is a mirror image of me, but she has her own image that is mirrored back to me.] Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. [Whether Adam said this, or this is God's pronouncement later on, is irrelevant to our understanding here. And now we're back to straight forward history.] And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed" (v. 25).

If you and I were writing the creation account, we would not end that account with two creatures in buck nakedness unashamed. We'd end it by saying, "There they were shaded by leaves bowed in prayer." God has told us He left them with His awareness of their answering one to another in nakedness, in shameless nakedness. And the devil doesn't enter the scene until chapter 3 and verse 1: "Now the serpent was more subtle." The devil has nothing to do with anything up to the end of chapter 2. So my proposition: our sexuality, including our desire and capacity for sexual pleasure originates with God and not with the devil. So when we read chapter 1 and verse 31, that God saw everything He had made and behold it was very good, read back into that this section of chapter 2. God looks down upon the man and the woman conscious that they have been made for each other with a mandate to be fruitful and to multiply and with every sacred yearning and capacity for the deepest intimacy of marital relations, and the devil doesn't have a whisper in the whole business--not a bit.

Now I ask you, do you feel comfortable with God's account of how He did it, or do you feel a little squeamish? I find it a good test. Ask yourself the question: "Do I feel comfortable with this, that Almighty God has established this, not the devil." You say, "Pastor, why is that so critical?" Well, for a number of reasons, but in my understanding, this is most basic: it is demonic to demean and deprecate what God has created and to consider unclean or suspicious what Almighty God has made noble and glorious. I want you to turn to 1 Timothy 4 so, again, you'll realize that this is not Pastor Martin taking off on a flourish of rhetorical excess when I say it is demonic to demean and deprecate what God has created and to consider it unclean. Paul is warning Timothy about certain influences that will crop out, and he ought to be aware of them in his ministry. Verse 1: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils." Behind the doctrines that emerge to infiltrate the church are unseen but very real demonic powers. That's what Paul says to Timothy. Through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, demons are behind the doctrines. The instruments through which the demons work are hypocrites who speak lies; who have their consciences seared, branded in their own consciences with a hot iron. So you've got demonic powers; you've got hypocritical deceived people who are instruments of these demonic thoughts and doctrines. And what are the specific doctrines? Look at verses 3-5:

"Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of

God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer."

Isn't that interesting that the thing Paul focuses upon is the demons who are working through these hypocritical men branded in their own consciences. And their major doctrine that he focuses upon is a form of asceticism. They forbid to marry. "You want to obtain a higher degree of spirituality, don't dabble in this sex business. To dabble is to be dirty." And he says that doctrine comes from demons. And when they say, "You want to become holy, then you will eat this restricted diet," he says, "No, that's to denigrate what God has given in creation. All that He made was good." And so I am bold to say that our sexuality, including our desire and capacity for sexual pleasure, originates with God and not with the devil. And in any way to attribute it to the devil is to find ourselves aligned with doctrines spawned by demons.

Now, this has great implications for all of us here. I want to speak a word to you dear young people. Many of you know, and we have said it, I hope, not in a way that genders pride or smugness--many of us who have been around a lot longer are very thankful for what we see God is doing in many of your lives: your apparent hunger for the Word; your seriousness about spiritual realities. Many of you have come to that place--my wife and I have used our own little euphemism--we say they've sprouted. When the young girls begin to develop and the guys begin to get a little fuzz on their cheeks and on their chin, we say they've sprouted. And with that sprouting, you become conscious of desires and interests and temptations that you've never faced before. You've gone, as we have humorously said, from the stage where the opposite sex is yuck or hmm--you've come to the yummy stage. You go from yuck to hmm to yum. Many of you have come into the hmm stage, and your conscious of these desires and inclinations and ininterests and a whole spectrum of things rooted in what you are as a male or as a female. You are merging into your mature masculinity and femininity. Adam and Eve were already made mature male and female with fully developed sexual capacity, appetite, and readiness for the sexual union within the sacred sanctuary of marriage. Man shall leave father and mother; cleave to his wife as a whole person. And they two and only such two shall be one flesh. But you're not there, but neither are you back in the yuck stage. Some of you are still there, but you're not going to stay there forever. Right now it seems utterly impossible that girls will ever be anything other than yuck. But I hope I live long enough to say, "Didn't I tell you?" You're going to move from the yuck to the hmm and from the hmm to the yum stage. Sooner or later unless something is short-circuited in the development of your mature manhood and womanhood, will be the emerging awareness of your sexuality with its desires and capacity for sexual pleasure. Don't think you're somehow degenerating into a demon when you're conscious of that. You're simply becoming the man or the woman God intended you to be. That's what I want to say to you kids. Nobody talked to me that way when I was where many of you are. And struggling through to think of myself Biblically was no easy thing. Yes, there will be peculiar temptations--we're not coming to that yet. We want to start with this fundamental principle that that capacity, the desire itself is not of the devil, but is an indication of God's creative wisdom and God's creative power and love.

I want to speak to some of you with a sordid sexual past. In pastoral counseling, I've found more than once how difficult it is when a man or woman who has had a sordid, sinful sexual past--how difficult to believe that that which was so much connected with the cesspool can be a spring and a pool of clear, God-reflecting beauty. It's hard for you to come to that, but you must. You must not allow the devil's triumphs in your past to cripple you in the present, and to think about your sexual being as something inherently and hopelessly stained. And you can't wait till you die and go to heaven and become a floating spirit. Well, you're not going to be a floating spirit forever. You're going to have a resurrected body. And I don't understand

all the implications, but there's no indication that we become some kind of neutered, amorphous, non-sexual being. Though there is no marriage or giving in marriage, it will be males and females for all eternity. For as male and female in heaven with glorified bodies, we'll reflect the image of our great and glorious God. You see how basic this is.

Then I want to immunize you against the horrible brainwashing job. You hear about: "We've got to get rid of this puritanical morality." Nobody's read the Puritans whose said that. I'm going to quote a few lines from the poet laureate of the Puritans, John Milton. You want to hear how prudish Puritans were? Read Milton. In "Paradise Lost" he's describing God bringing Eve to Adam:

[And the two of them walking off into the sunset hand in hand] Handed they went; and, eased the putting off These troublesome disguises which we wear, [See what he was saying? They were both naked and not ashamed. They didn't have to put off what he calls troublesome disguises which we wear.]

Straight side by side were laid; nor turned, I ween,
Adam from his fair spouse, nor Eve the rites
Mysterious of connubial love refused: [There was delightful, willing commitment to the covenant of marriage and to the expression of that commitment in sexual intimacy.]
Whatever hypocrites austere talk
Of purity, and place, and innocence,
Defaming as impure what God declares
Pure, and commands to some, leaves free to all.
Our Maker bids increase; who bids abstain
But our Destroyer [the devil], foe to God and Man?
Hail, wedded Love, mysterious law, true source
Of human offspring, sole propriety
In Paradise of all things common else.
By thee adulterous Lust was driven from men
Among the bestial herds to range; by thee
Founded in reason, loyal, just, and pure,
Relations dear, and all the charities
Of father, son, and brother, first were known.
Far be it, that I should write thee sin or blame,
Or think thee unbefitting holiest place,
Perpetual fountain of domestic sweets,
Whose bed is undefiled and chaste pronounced,
Present, or past, as saints and patriarchs used.
Here Love [within marriage with sexual intimacy] his golden shafts employs, here lights
His constant lamp, and waves his purple wings,
Reigns here and revels; not in the bought smile
Of harlots, loveless, joyless, unendeared,
Casual fruition; nor in court-amours,
Mixed dance, or wanton mask, or midnight ball,
Or serenade, which the starved lover sings
To his proud fair, best quitted with disdain [love em and leave em--no new thing under the sun].
These, [Adam and Eve] lulled by nightingales, embracing slept,
And on their naked limbs the flowery roof
Showered roses, which the morn repaired.

Now isn't that horribly restrictive puritanic views of our sexuality. Nonsense! It's beautiful. Maybe you can't appreciate that. I get the goose bumps reading it. There's nothing in there that's sinfully erotic. It simply paints in beautiful verse what the Word of God says: "God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good."

The second proposition is this: the God who designed and created us with our sexuality is the only one who has the right to determine and impose its legitimate functions. Now, most of you probably out in the glove compartment of your cars have what you call an owners manual. It's really not the owners manual. It's the manufacturer's manual. They made the car; they put the various components together; they know best how every one of those components can operate, be serviced, be maintained so that you get optimum use of that thing which the manufacturer made with a specific end in view: that it would be a functional, safe means of transportation. Who knows better how to write the manual than the manufacturer? That's why the owners manual comes from the manufacturer--it comes with the car. You say, "Okay, pastor, obvious. Do you think I'm stupid? Sure I understand that." Well, suppose--now we've got to use our imagination--just suppose you should go out in the parking lot tonight, and there you see a vehicle over on its back. Suddenly this vehicle has a mind and it can talk. And the wheels are spinning and the horn is blowing, and you say, "Car what in the world are you doing?" And the car says, "Woo-hoo, I just found out I can make noise. I just love making noise. Listen to me. Honk, honk, honk." And you say, "Crazy old car, you're not supposed to do that." The car says, "I can do something else. Watch me spin my wheels." It goes up to 100 mph. Kids, you say no car would be stupid enough to do that if it could think and speak. You see where I'm going with the illustration. The thing was never turned off the production line to function that way. Does it have the capacity to be on its back making noise? Yes, I've seen cars that have run into a telephone pole, and the horn got jammed. And all it was was a bent up noise maker. But it wasn't made for that, and how do we know it? Well, among other ways, we know it because the manufacturer, who made it with a specific end in view, has given us an owners manual telling us how to have the thing function to the optimum end for which it was created. Now, it's a silly illustration, but I find that people are most helped by the silly illustrations when all the more profound things get washed away with time. Do you see the application? Whose the manufacturer of you and me? "In the beginning God created.... And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness." He's the manufacturer, and the product He made has sexual capacities, sexual functions, and sexual desires. But it was never made to have a mind of its own to toot its horn and spin its wheels.

The God who made us is the God who has the exclusive right to determine and to impose upon us the legitimate functions of that which He has made. Notice how He did that with the appetite for food. There in Genesis--we're back in creation again. In Genesis chapter 2, God has made the man not only with sexual appetite and capacity for enjoyment and sexual function, but He's made him with a stomach, with a digestive system, with salivary glands, with those nerves that go to that part in the brain that say you're hungry, and you satisfy hunger with food. And God has declared that He has given him all that is there in the garden, but He has put a restriction. Look at it in Genesis 2:16: "And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Now, here God makes a creature with an appetite. And He makes him with eyes that can see food and appreciate what the food will taste like and what it will do to assuage hunger. But the creature made with hunger was not left free to gratify his hunger any old way he chose to. He had to gratify his appetite for food according to the directions of the God who made him with an appetite. God said, "That's out of bounds." He has the right to do it. And without going into the whole matter of the significance of this, the basic issue is clear

from the text. God said "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat. [You have an urge to pick that piece of fruit because somehow you think it will taste this way, experiment with it, Adam. That's your privilege. Of all the trees you may freely eat. But of that one, under no circumstances are you to eat.]" Do you remember in the temptation when the devil in the form of a serpent speaks to Eve? One of the snares was: she saw. Verse 6 of chapter 3: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes." You see, those things which can cause us to salivate and cause us to think we desire a certain food all kicked in, and they were directed to the tree. But over that tree stood the X of God--"Don't touch it; don't eat of it lest you die." Well, in the same way without the same explicitness in this passage, when God makes the man and the woman with the capacity and desire for sexual enjoyment and fulfillment, he mandates to them, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. [When you engage in sexual intimacy and there is conception and birth, you are pleasing Me. You have my mandate to be fruitful and to multiply and to replenish the earth.]" The God who has designed and created us with our sexuality is the only one who has the right to determine and impose its legitimate functions. So then, when our Lord centuries later in Matthew 19 is questioned about the issue of the permanence of marriage (this whole thorny question of divorce), what does He do? Matthew 19:3:

"The Pharisees also came unto Him, tempting Him, and saying unto Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife [very clearly that sexual fulfillment is to be heterosexual by the design of God--man and woman. 'Cleave to his wife'--and only within that cleaving, that total covenantal commitment of one man to one woman is there to be sexual intimacy]: and they twain shall be one flesh?"

What two? Those who decide they like each other and want to spend a night together or agree to live together for a period of time. No, the two who have made this leaving and cleaving and this irrevocable covenant of commitment. The Lord is saying right from the beginning that was the divine intention. You say, "Who is God to tell us what to do?" He's our Creator. The whole idea was His, and He had noble ends to secure glory to Himself. And He says within this framework, "My glory will be seen and revealed in those creatures that I have made with sexual capacities and functions and desires, and they are to be fulfilled according to the mandate of My own Word and nothing else." So when God is about to articulate from Sinai that summary of all moral duty, He gives the 7th commandment, "Thou shalt not commit adultery.

On into Matthew 5 when Jesus takes to task those religious externalists who thought that if they were never caught in bed with a woman other than their wife, they had kept the 7th commandment, He says, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust [with a view to desiring, and in his mind conceives of having sexual fulfillment with anyone other than his wife] hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." Now, dear men, the Lord is not saying that whoever turns his head inadvertently and sees a woman who is attractive and may not be dressed modestly, and he is tempted to look where he shouldn't look and allow the look to give birth to thoughts; who at that moment turns away--he's not violating the words of our Lord. He said, "Whoso looks with an intent to lust." And I've seen poor overly sensitive men feeling, "I'm breaking the 7th commandment because I'm turning my head away all day." No, you're turning your head away because you're determined not to break it. Bless God for that. And if there's ever a marginal thing, then say, "Lord, I'm not sure if that second look involved

lusting, but if it did, cleanse me in the blood of Your Son and help me next time not to look the second time."

The Lord has the right to tell us that, and it works the other way around. It used to be years ago in the ministry, I thought it unthinkable to talk about women lusting after men. But not in this day. One of the wretched realities of the feminist movement is to make women think, "You've got as much right to lust after men as men have to lust after you." And I could demonstrate that by describing some of the stuff that is seen in popular magazines--I'm not talking about pornography. You women, if you look with an intent to lust--"O, he's got a firm body; he's got this; he's got that"--you're breaking the 7th commandment, and God has a right to tell you that. And God has a right to say in Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Why? Because whoremongers and adulterers say, "I've got sexual capacity and sexual desire, and those are my desires and my capacities. And nobody, including God is going to tell me what to do with them." My friend, that's the mark of an unregenerate man whose "carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Romans 8:7). And that's why God says whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" (1 Corinthians 6:9). And at the head of the list, Paul lists these forms of sexual deviation. Similarly in Revelation 21:8 and there again in Romans 1:18 and following.

So then, we come to this second proposition: that the God who designed and created us with our sexuality is the only one who has a right to determine and impose its legitimate functions. Now, I believe with all my heart there are many of you who welcome God's impositions of His will over your sexual capacity, functions, and capacity to enjoy the sexual relationship. I believe with all my heart there are many of you who say of every precept and principle in Scripture that touches that area of your life, "O how love I Thy commandments. O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes." And I trust that as this study unfolds, you will welcome into your heart those directives; that in a sinful world with your own remaining corruption and with a thousand provocations that jump the boundaries of God's own directives, by the grace of God, you shall be a people marked by unblemished sexual purity and uprightness. It is possible in this cesspool of our present society, by the grace of God, to be like a Joseph there in Potiphar's court. He resists every overture to violate the law of his God. And he comes through as gold tried in the crucible of testing: maligned and slandered, but eventually wonderfully vindicated.

Why is this second principle so critical? Well, for a number of reasons, but let me state this: because of the prevailing climate of our western culture that now assumes that right or wrong in fulfilling sexual desires can be determined by consensus. Everyone refers to the 60s as the period of the sexual revolution. Revolution against what? Most people assume it was a revolution against puritanic prudishness (puritanic, infantile mentality about sex). "We've now through the sexual revolution come of age." And what did God give our nation as His thank you for that revolution? The plague of AIDS and illegitimacy at levels that have not been in the history of our nation. That pressure is upon us. Add to that the aggressive, frighteningly militant so-called gay rights movements that are determined that everyone of you sitting here and this man standing here will not merely say that I will give to an outspoken, committed homosexual, male or female, the right to conduct himself with the freedom secured by our constitution, but I must give to him the approbation that his lifestyle is as pleasing to God as mine. That is their agenda. Don't be deceived! Nothing less than that will satisfy them. It is not mere toleration; it is approbation at every level. That's why one of our dear members here had the heartbreaking experience of getting a letter from a young man who shamelessly says,

"Now that I've declared what I am as a homosexual, I've love Jesus more than I've ever loved Him. He is more precious than He's ever been. If you want to be my friend, I welcome your friendship on one condition: you don't use your friendship to try to do anything to dissuade me that what I now believe and experience is well-pleasing to God."

I've seen the letter with my own eyes. He has simply absorbed the agenda of the so-called gay rights movement. That pressure is on us. More and more when you say in the sweetest terms possible as I can say tonight, if there's sitting among us someone committed to a lesbian lifestyle in the fulfillment of sexual appetite, or a man committed to a homosexual lifestyle, in the name of Christ and for the sake of Christ, I believe I'd be prepared to give my life to win you to Christ. But in telling you I want to win you to Christ, I want to win you to a Christ who will break the chains that bind you to your perversion and set you free to be Christ's man, Christ's woman with a body that will honor Him so that in any of its sexual expressions, they will be an expression of submission to the law and will of the God who made you as a sexual being. We live in a country that thinks if enough states approve of same-sex marriages, they will be legitimized. "Who in the world are you, you un-American, proud, bigoted prude? Get with it." Isaiah 8:20: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The Scripture says, "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

If you sit here as one whose heart has been ripped open; that in this area you have been a rebel against God, nothing in the Bible says sexual sins are unpardonable sins. As we shall see when we come to 1 Corinthians 6, Paul describes every major category of sexual deviation and says those who continue in it shall not enter the kingdom of God. But, he says, "Such were some of you, but you have been washed, you have been sanctified, you have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." No matter how deeply ingrained have been your patterns of sexual sin, the blood of Jesus Christ God's Son cleanses from all sin. Jesus said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men" (Matthew 21:31). Sexual sins are not blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, nor are regressions into any specific acts of sexual sin, nor are they to be the thing that cripples the child of God. 1 John 1:9 applies to the child of God who falls in the area of sexual sin: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." So may God help us as we by His grace seek to wrestle together with this subject of the divine antidote to sexual impurity to start with the right foundation. Proposition number one: our sexuality, including our desire and capacity for sexual pleasure, originates with God and not with the devil. And Proposition number two: the God who designed and created us with our sexuality is the only one who has the right to determine and impose its legitimate functions. And thank God He has revealed Himself in grace and mercy in the person and work of Jesus Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit so that Paul can say, "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." That is the way of having a just pardon and a righteousness imputed. By the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, we can be accepted before God and in the community of His people. And by the grace of God, be those who show in this area of our lives the wonderful power of redeeming grace.

What a wonderful thing it will be if the Lord tarries to see you young people who now profess to some degree of attachment to Christ, and be able to sit with one of your pastors in premarital counseling and to hear you say with a glow upon your face in the presence of a servant of God, "John, Harry, Pete [whatever his name is], by the

grace of God, I've kept myself for you. You'll not get damaged goods on our wedding night." And have a young man look a woman in the eyes and say, "By the grace of God, God has kept me from being sucked into the vortex of this cesspool that's become a whirlpool." And I tell you, the whirlpool gets more and more powerful. When you hear as I've heard recently of a well-known preacher in another country shamelessly declaring he's gone to live with his homosexual lover, I tell you, folks, this is not whistling Dixie or crying, fire! fire! when there is no fire. And if we aren't straight here, it's doubtful we'll be able to make much progress in any other area of our Christian life.

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