

# The Divine Antidote to Sexual Impurity #3

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We come this evening to the third message in a brief series of messages that I've entitled "The Divine Antidote to Sexual Impurity." And as I've reflected upon that title which has no divine inspiration, I assure you, I thought we might better entitle the series "The Divine Prescription for Sexual Purity," or what I hope and pray it will be for many of you, particularly you young men and women, "A Divine Immunization Against Sexual Impurity." But whether God uses His Word as an antidote to the poison of sexual impurity that is yet within us, a prescription for the path of sexual purity, or an divine immunization against it, I trust that God will own His Word to help us in an area that must be addressed from the Word of God. And as I indicated in the first message, in checking back through what I have preached, it's been fourteen and a half years since I addressed this subject in a brief series of messages from this very pulpit. No matter what title we choose, it is my desire that in an age marked by an obsession with sex, an age which has cut itself loose from Biblical moorings and is out to sea with no compass and no rudder--it is my goal to let the Scriptures be our navigational chart and compass that we might not be dashed upon the rock of lawlessness, relativism, and subjectivism that so often are present when this matter is discussed in our current society.

My approach has been to state some foundational Biblical issues in the form of propositions. I've stated the propositions, explained the meaning of my words, and then turned to the Scriptures to show that these propositions are constructed from the over-arching teaching of the Word of God. In other words, I have been engaging in systematic theology, whether you knew it or not with respect to this subject. Thus far, we've addressed three of these propositions. I'll only state them, and then we move tonight to the fourth. Proposition number one: our sexuality, including our desire and capacity for sexual pleasure, originates with God and not the devil. Genesis 1 and 2 clearly establish this. And 1 Timothy 4 clearly sets forth the fact that anything that denigrates and looks upon this faculty with which God has endowed us as essentially sinful is a demonic perspective and not of God. Proposition number two: the God who designed us and created us with our sexuality is the only One who has the right to determine and impose upon us its legitimate functions. The fact that mankind was made male and female with sexual identity with the capacity for sexual pleasure was God's notion, and being God's notion, He alone has the right to tell us His intentions with respect to that which He has designed and made. And there we looked again at Genesis 1 and 2 and several other key passages, not the least of which is that commandment imbedded in the moral law: "Thou shalt not commit adultery." God sets the boundaries for the fulfillment and expression of our human sexuality. Then last week, we took up proposition number three, and it was this: the willful, impenitent indulgence in sexual sin in the mind or practice will bar a person from heaven and will certainly result in the damnation of hell. To fool around with sex is to toy with

damnation. To state it bluntly, our Lord Jesus says to indulge illicit sex in the mind is to make ourselves candidates for the lake of fire. Our Lord says at any cost to ourselves there must be a turning from illicit sexual thoughts as well as actions, or there hangs over us the threat of the pit of eternal burnings. And we looked at seven key texts which clearly establish this fact.

Now tonight, we come to the fourth and final foundational proposition, and God willing, in the next two messages, I want to look with you at two watershed passages in the New Testament. I would urge you to try to read them this coming week: 1 Corinthians 6 verses 12 to the end of the chapter and the first few verses of chapter 7, and then 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8. Now tonight, we take up this fourth foundational proposition. Please don't be scared away by the language. I've labored to choose words carefully and deliberately. I will explain the meaning of them, so don't pull down the shade over your mind until we help shed some light upon this collection of words. Proposition number four is this: a real participation in the dynamics of saving grace will deliver us from the dominion of sin, including sexual sins, and equip us for progressive growth in sexual purity. Now I want you to look upon this proposition with me as though it were a pillar comprised of three large blocks. On the front of the block, there are parts of the proposition. And on the backside, there are the Biblical texts which warrant the language that I have chosen.

We take block number one--it's these words: a real participation in the dynamics of saving grace. What in the world do I mean by those words? The dynamics of a thing are the forces or powers that are operative in any given field. There are social dynamics as men and women, boys and girls interact with one another. There are powers and influences and forces operative in that social interaction, and we call those the dynamics of social interaction. We could speak of the dynamics of economic structures within the field of handling money and commerce. There are forces and influences at work. Those are the dynamics of economic interaction. So I'm speaking tonight of participation in the dynamics of saving grace.

There is a non-saving common grace of God by which men and women are restrained from being as bad as they could be, and are constrained to do good things as men count things good. That's God's common grace. Jesus refers to it when He says in Luke 11:13, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children...." How do evil men know how to give good to their children, and how are they disposed to give good? Because in God's common grace, they do things that men count good. There are marvelous examples in the Old Testament of how God's common grace restrained men from being as evil as they could be. You remember that man Abimelech? He took Sarah, not knowing she was Abraham's wife, because he said, "She is my sister." And God restrained him from having any sexual relations with her. That was His common grace.

But we're concerned tonight about the dynamics, the forces and powers that are operative within the sphere, not of God's common grace, but of His saving grace; that is, those forces and powers that are true only to those who are God's true people by His grace in Christ. And I've used the terms "a real participation" in those forces and powers and influences peculiar to the sphere of God's saving grace. Why have I used the terms "a real participation?" Because there is a pseudo participation. The Bible speaks of those who think they're in the realm of God's saving grace; who say that they are within the sphere of the dynamics of God's saving grace. But it is a pseudo profession. For example, in 1 John 1:6, John writes to such people and says, "If we

say that we have fellowship with Him...." Here are some who say, "We are within the orbit of the dynamics of God's saving grace. We have come into living, real fellowship with God." And yet they walk in the darkness. John says, "[They] lie, and do not the truth." That is a pseudo participation: a false, spurious, counterfeit participation in the dynamics of saving grace. Chapter 2 and verse 4 of the same letter: "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." His profession of being within the orbit and under the influence of the dynamics of saving faith is a lie. Titus 1:16: "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him." 2 Timothy 3:5: "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." They go through the motions; they may maintain an orthodox creed, but they have no true, real participation in the power, in the dynamics of God's saving grace. And I've used the word "participation" deliberately. I did not say, "a real experience" of the dynamics because that would focus too much upon a crisis of conversion. And because we have a number of you who have been reared in the context of Godly instruction, who by God's common grace have had sensitive consciences--many of you will not know precisely when you passed from death unto life. The last thing I want to do in any preaching is to bind your consciences and become the devil's tool to discourage you or rob you of assurance that may be rightly yours. So what God is concerned about and what I'm concerned about is not an experience of saving grace, but the indications that we are truly participating here and now in saving grace. Precisely when we began to is a matter of no consequence, but that we are is a matter of life and death. So in this first block, I'm addressing this matter of a real participation in the dynamics of of saving grace.

What are those dynamics? Well, that would take a whole series of messages, but let me just run by a few of them right now. Within the orbit of God's true saving grace, there's such a thing as the new birth. This is what Jesus speaks about in John 3 when He says to this religious leader, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." And He went on to say, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Within the realm of God's saving grace, there is the reality of the new birth. There is the dynamic, the operative force of a birth by the Spirit of God. There is the reality of being a new creation. 2 Corinthians 5:17: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." A parallel passage is Ephesians 2:10: "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus." And there are the twin realities of these dynamics of God's saving grace: in Christ and new creation. To be united to Christ is not a religious concept; it is not a philosophical notion. It is a vital spiritual reality that transforms everyone who is brought into union with Christ. If any is in Christ--new creation. A dynamic, operative force has been at work in the heart of that one united to Christ. In the language of the prophet Ezekiel and Jeremiah picked up and quoted in Hebrews 8 and 10, there is the dynamic of the new covenant blessing of a new heart. God says, "I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 11:19). That's something real and vital God does in us when He brings us within the orbit of His saving grace. There is the new standing before God: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:12). And when we are given the status of adopted sons and daughters, a legal transaction, God does not stop there. We read in Galatians 4:6: "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." That's what it means to be within the dynamics of God's saving grace: to have been born again, to be in Christ, to be a

new creation, to have a new heart, a new standing, the spirit of adoption. And we could go on and on. That's what I mean by the dynamics of saving grace: all of those things that are operative in the heart or life of anyone who is drawn by God's power into the orbit of His saving grace. So as we take up this fourth proposition, we're concerned with a real participation in the dynamics of saving grace.

Now that brings us to block number two on which are these words: this will deliver us from the dominion of sin, including sexual sin. Now let me seek to demonstrate from the Word of God the truth of these words. The Bible is very clear in asserting that in every true child of God, sin no longer reigns though it does certainly remain and will remain until the moment of our deaths when our spirits will be instantaneously made at home with "the spirits of just men made perfect." Or should we be alive at the coming of the Lord Jesus, the moment He comes, He intensifies and augments the work that has been going on progressively, and "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." In John 8, the Lord is found addressing some Jews of whom it is said they believed on Him. There is some expression of faith toward Christ:

"Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered Him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest Thou, Ye shall be made free?" (vv. 31-33).

They had a short memory. What was Egypt if that wasn't bondage? What was Babylon if that wasn't bondage? What was their present state if that wasn't bondage? They couldn't even kill Jesus without drawing in the Roman authority. They had no power to execute by capital punishment. But in their spiritual blindness and pride, they said, "We've never been in bondage to any man." Notice how the Lord responds: "Verily, verily, [one of those majestically statements of Truth incarnate: truly, truly, amen, amen--listen to what I'm about to say] I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin [everyone who is practicing sin, everyone in whom sin is the pattern of life] is the servant [bondslave] of sin" (v. 34). Everyone to whom sin is master is a slave of that master. He's saying this to religious people with all of their religious knowledge and religious practice and religious profession. He says, "You need to be liberated." They say, "Liberated from what? We've never been in bondage to anyone." He says, "Yes, you are in bondage. You're in bondage to your sin."

Verse 36: "If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." The force of the arrangement in the original is this: "If the Son shall make you free, really free, you shall be really free. You think you're free, but you're deluded. You're slaves of your sin. If I make you free, that freedom is not positional." I can't believe some of the nonsense I've heard in the name of expounding the Bible. Anything that touches upon the radical nature of what the theologians have come to call definitive sanctification (that if we've come within the orbit of the dynamics of saving grace, there is a radical breach with the dominion of sin), people say, "That's just positional sanctification." No, Jesus said this freedom is not a word; it's not a concept; it's a blessed reality. If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. Free for what? Free to let all of life be regulated by the Word of Christ. "If ye continue [remain] in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (vv. 31-32). You will live as free men to do the will of your heavenly Father as that will is expressed in My Word. There is the clear teaching that any participation in the dynamics of saving grace will deliver us from the dominion of sin.

Now turn to another pivotal text: Romans 6. Here in the last half of the chapter under the imagery of slave and master, Paul is teaching that all who have come into union with Christ by faith, not only have an imputed righteousness, a righteousness external to them based solely upon the doing and dying of Jesus, but in virtue of their union with Christ, they have died to sin (vv. 1-14), and they have been released from their former master of sin and have become the willing bondslaves of God and of Christ and of righteousness. In summary of the teaching of the first half of the chapter, he says in verse 14, "For sin shall not have dominion over you." Literally, sin shall not exercise lordship over you. Now notice, that's not an exhortation; it is a statement of reality given what he has previously taught in this chapter. If we're united to Christ, the dominion of sin has been broken. In virtue of His death, burial, and resurrection, we in union with Him have died to sin and risen to newness of life. "Sin shall not"--it doesn't say, "sin ought not" or "sin eventually will not," but "sin shall not have dominion over you." Why? "For you are not under law." That is, you are not in the state by which you came in by nature. You've come within the orbit of the dynamics of grace. And because you have, there's been a change of masters. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Verse 15 and 16:

"What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"

Two masters: sin leading to death and obedience leading to righteousness, practical, personal, imparted righteousness. This is not imputed righteousness. That's dealt with in the previous section of Romans. "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin [he says all of you Roman Christians were at one time slaves of sin], but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." He likens the Gospel as a form of teaching into which they were cast. When the Gospel came to them, and by the power of the Holy Spirit effectually worked into them, they were cast into mold of the Gospel, a Gospel which holds out, not only free forgiveness and justifying righteousness, but liberation from the tyranny of sin. "Thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people [away] from their sins [its consequences, its deserved damnation, yes, but also its galling, enslaving power]" (Matthew 1:21). And what happened? "Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (v. 17). If you're a Christian, you've been made free from sin. If you've not been made free from sin, you've never become a Christian. Look at what the text says. I didn't write it; it's a good translation. Now obviously, it's not saying that you've been made free from sin so that sin no longer remains. Paul will deal with that very adequately in chapter 7, and he will deal with it biographically: "The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." So he's not teaching sinless perfection, but neither is he teaching positional sanctification. He's saying you actually became free from sin. In what sense? The sense of verse 14. Sin no longer exercises its lordship over you. You became free from sin; you became the servants of righteousness. He says,

"I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members [that is, your physical faculties: your mind, your spirit, your hands, your feet, your sexual members] servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.

For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

Could words be any plainer? Anyone who has a real participation in the dynamics of saving grace has been delivered from the dominion of sin, including sexual sins, sins committed with our members that have sexual nerve endings, and our eyeballs that can receive sexual stimulation and signals. As surely as your slavery to sin was real in that it engaged your faculties, so now this new Master is real and His call to you is real. And you present your faculties unto Him as one who does indeed joyfully own his new Master (righteousness, God, Jesus Christ, and all that is found in Him). So you see that second block of the pillar on which are these words "Saving grace will deliver us from the dominion of sin, including sexual sins" is not some notion spun out of my own head.

Turn to Galatians 5 (third text), familiar words beginning in verse 16:

"This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. [Paul's assuming that real Christians still have fleshly lusts, which they can fulfill to their grief and shame as well as to the dishonor of God.] For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. [You are not in that realm where there are no dynamics of grace operative. All you have is God's standard pressing down upon your conscience. And you're either searing your conscience, or if you yield to the pressure of your conscience, you're in despair. The law has no power to deliver you. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.] Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these [and look at the ones at the top of the list]; adultery, fornication [sexual impurity of all stripes and denominations and all kinds], uncleanness, lasciviousness [wanton abandonment to passions and lusts], idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like [he said the list could go on and on--this is just a sampling]: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. [There's an underscoring of the principle from last week. A pattern of indulgence in sexual sin will land you in hell. You'll not inherit the kingdom of God. It's clear, if you give in to the burning of sinful passion, the price you'll pay, unless by thorough repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, will be the burning in outer darkness.] But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance [control over myself, including my sexual appetites and my sexual passions]: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's [those who have come into the dynamics of saving grace] have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

There has been a fundamental reckoning with the dominion of sin as it expresses itself through the passions and lusts of flesh. And it says they have crucified it. This is not an exact parallel to Romans 6. It is another dimension of this great truth, that where there is saving grace, we will be delivered from the dominion of sin, including sexual sin. Now we could multiply texts, but if these three witnesses don't persuade you, I doubt that three more will.

But you say, "Pastor, there's a little bit of reference to sexual sin there in Galatians (a couple of specific ones), and certainly by inference and by logical deduction in Romans 6 if the dominion of sin was manifested by presenting our members, including those members by which sexual appetites and desires are expressed. But isn't there something more specific that really clenches this fact that real participation in the dynamics of saving grace will deliver from the dominion of sin, including sexual sin? The clearest text I know is 1 Corinthians 6. (God willing, I'll give a more detailed exposition of this next Lord's Day in conjunction with the communion meditation.) Notice how clearly the Apostle addresses the issue. Verse 9:

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind [I gave a more detailed explanation of what those words mean last Lord's Day], nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

Settle it, Paul says, it's non-negotiable. Don't sit down and discuss it or debate about it. A lifestyle dominated by any one or more of these sins is inconsistent with being in a state of grace. What hope is there for these Corinthians then? Verse 11:

"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 [in conjunction with the revelation of God's saving mercy in the person and work of Him who is the Lord, even Jesus Messiah], and by the Spirit of our God."

Paul says when you came within the orbit of the influence of Christ's name, that is, the revelation of God's saving mercy in Him and within the orbit of the effectual work of the Holy Spirit, you now are in the category of "the weres." ("Such were some of you.") You are no longer adulterers. You are no longer fornicators. You are no longer effeminate. You are no longer indulging in sexual license as a way of life. Why? Because any real participation in the dynamics of saving grace will deliver us from the dominion of sin, including sexual sin. Now if that hasn't established it from my Bible, I don't know how to try to do it. Perhaps I'm speaking of someone who sits here and says,

"If that's what the Bible teaches, then I've never come within the orbit of God's saving grace. If the dynamics, the forces, the powers that are operative in that realm will deliver from sin, including the dominion and tyranny of sexual sin, then I have no reason to believe that I've come within that orbit. What can I do?"

My answer is relatively simple. You run to the One upon whom God sent His Spirit. In Isaiah 61, quoted by the Lord Jesus Himself in His hometown of Nazareth in the synagogue--that passage that says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives..." (Luke 4:18). You go to Jesus with your chains clanking all around you and say, "Lord Jesus, here's a helpless slave of sin. You said, 'If the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.' Lord Jesus, make me living proof of your Word." Go to Him with your chains clanking. Don't try to get a blow torch or a hacksaw of your own doing and get rid of all your chains so you can feel yourself fit to go to Jesus. Go to Him with your clanking chains and say, "Lord Jesus, snap them. Lord Jesus, set the captive free. Lord Jesus, cleanse the captive; Lord Jesus, purge the captive." You have the promise, "Him that

cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out (John 6:27). Thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save [rescue, deliver] His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). He delivers not only from their guilt, their hell-deservingness, their wrath-deservingness but their galling, domineering power.

We come now to block number three: a real participation in the dynamics of saving grace will equip us for progressive growth in sexual purity. Coming within the orbit of God's saving grace and the dynamics that are operative within that realm not only delivers us from the dominion of sin, but equips us for progressive growth in sexual purity. God equips us for the battle that begins when no longer is there only one master in charge (sin). Paul says when you were the slaves of sin, you were free in regards to righteousness. Righteousness says, "Thou shalt; thou shalt not." And you say, "Who is righteousness? I've got my lusts. I've got my passions. I've got my nerve endings. I've got my appetites. They are the only master I recognize." That's what Paul is saying. When you were the slaves of sin, you were free; you were acting like free men when this master called righteousness would speak. You would say, "He's not my boss. My boss is sin, and I'll yield myself to my boss." But now Paul says, "You have a change of masters." And what does that result in? Back to Romans 6. There we have not only a description of the fact that when we are really and truly within the dynamics of saving grace, sin's dominion is broken, but this text also makes it clear that we are equipped for progressive growth in sexual purity. Verse 22: "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have [present tense: you are having] your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." A change of masters, a change of practice, and a change of destiny. No one has a change of destiny who doesn't have a change of practice. And no one has a change of practice who doesn't have a change of masters. It's all one ball of wax. That's God's way of saving sinners. Even the thief on the cross brought forth fruit unto righteousness. He identified himself with Jesus; he sought to vindicate Jesus before his cussing buddy with whom he joined in chorus of reviling for some time while he was on that cross, for we read in the Gospels that both malefactors cast the same into His face. And in those few remaining minutes, he was bringing forth fruit unto sanctification or holiness. And Jesus said to this man, "Today thou shalt be with Me in paradise." When we come into the orbit of the dynamics of saving grace, not only is the dominion of sin broken, but we are equipped for progressive growth in sexual purity. That is a dimension of bringing forth fruit unto sanctification.

And as we shall see--and let us just look at it for a moment so you'll realize this is not pressing the issue. When Paul addresses the Thessalonians, he obviously felt it necessary in his relatively brief stay among them to emphasize this, because he reminds them that this is something he had already talked about, but now he puts a half a chapter in the same area of concern. So I'm not at all disturbed if anyone who's heard these three messages goes out and says, "All you talk about is sex there." Frankly, your false witness of us won't stick. That isn't all we talk about, and I fear we're not giving as much emphasis to this as the Bible does. And that's why I've been constrained to address the subject in these few messages. This is what Paul says:

"Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification [and is he talking about sanctification generically? No], that ye should abstain from fornication" (vv. 1-3).

He equates his focused instruction of sanctification in this area of sexual purity. And then he goes on to open up the matter more fully and says that this is intricately bound up in our effectual calling. We are called in our effectual call unto holiness or sanctification. And in the context, it is the sanctification of sexual purity. Now how do we get equipped to grow progressively in this grace of sexual purity? We get equipped when we are brought into the orbit of the dynamics of God's saving grace.

Viewed from another standpoint, John 15 addresses this. Here, growing out of the Biblical doctrine of union with Christ, that we are joined to Him not only federally and legally--blessed God we are, or we would have no imputed righteousness--it is our federal union with Christ that is at the base of justifying righteousness. But we have more than a federal union. We have a vital life union with Christ as expressed in John 15:1-5:

"I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman [caretaker, gardener]. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it [prunes it], that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide [remain] in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him [the life that flows through Me flows into him], the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me [severed from Me] ye can do nothing."

O, yes, we can do a lot of things, but over of all of them is the word "sin." But we can do nothing that is reflective of the likeness and the will of Christ apart from being united to Him and abiding in Him. Well, how do we get into Christ? We are brought into Him vitally when we come within the orbit of God's saving grace in our own experience. Whether that is at the dawning of the day--and we don't know when we are actually joined to Christ--or whether, like Paul, it is like a thunder clap and a lightening bolt out of the clear blue sky, when we are united to Him (i.e. brought within the dynamics of saving grace), we are so united to Him that we are equipped for progressive growth in sexual purity. The Scripture says he who says he abides in Him ought to walk as He walked. He walked amongst man as a man. He had close relationships with men that never bordered on the impure. He had deep and close and even intimate relationships with women, but never once stained with a lustful thought or a lustful touch. As we abide in Him, the grace that was operative in our blessed Lord, our Head, the true Vine, is operative in us. We are equipped by virtue of our union with Christ.

Now go to Philippians 2:12 and 13 (again trying to bring in three clear witnesses to these principles): "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." He is saying,

"I'm going to exhort you, that as when I was among you, you manifested the grace principle of obedience to your Lord. Now that I'm absent, lest any should say your attachment to Christ was somehow dependant upon my presence, much more in my absence now, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Go on in the growth and development of the grace imparted to you when God effectually called you by the Word and the Gospel. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling, with the engagement of all your faculties, remembering the seriousness of this task,

for it is God who is continually working in you both to will and work for His good pleasure."

He can say of all of these Philippians, "The dynamics of saving grace are constantly working in you, both inclining your will to do what you should and then giving you the power to do it." Some would say, "If that's so, then I sit back and catch the wave." He says, "No, work it out with all of your faculties and with all the intensity of all your powers in the confidence that every time you make a righteous choice and you're given grace to perform a righteous deed, it was God who worked in you both to will and to work." You say, "I can't figure it out." Well, that's too bad, I'm sorry, that's the way it is. That's what God has said. And how could Paul be so confident? Because He knew that these people had come within the orbit of saving grace, and the dynamics of that grace were constantly at work equipping them for progressive growth and sanctification generically. That's the emphasis here. But a major subhead of generic sanctification, according to 1 Thessalonians 4, is the matter of growing progressively in the grace of sexual purity.

One other text. It's a good one on which to close because it comes as a kind of benediction. After giving some serious warnings against apostasy saying, "We are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation," the author of Hebrews brings his letter almost to a conclusion in chapter 13 verses 20 and 21:

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Now think back through this epistle: some of the very stringent exhortations and directions given to these people. And it's as though some might say, "How in the world are we to fulfill all of those injunctions: holding fast our hope firm unto the end, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves, exhorting one another while it's called today, fearing lest we enter not into God's rest?" He says,

Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you [within the orbit of saving grace and there the dynamics of God's working in you] that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ [as it comes to Him made fragrant through the mediation of His beloved Son]; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

You see, dear Christian, God's not like Pharaoh: "Make bricks, but no straw." God says, "Make bricks, and here's the straw and more than straw. I'll infuse the strength to your arm. I'll infuse the wisdom into your mind. And all that you need to do what is well pleasing to Me through Jesus Christ, I'm prepared to work in you to do My will." I believe it was Augustine who said, "Give what You command and then command what You will." God's salvation is all of grace, but it is a grace that works in us that which is well pleasing in His sight.

Would you be sexually pure, you who perhaps this night are conscious that you do have chains? The answer is, you must get within the orbit of the dynamics of God's saving grace and take the shortest route by repentance and faith. Or if you're a child of God and you've been crippled in this area, begin to cry to God that you will see

what you now have in Christ that you're not appropriating and what you must do in obedience to the Word of Christ that you're not doing. For some of you, your assurance is even up for grabs as long as this monkey is on your back. You need to cry to God as we move into these other passages where the Apostle assumes that these people who have even been overcome by some gross manifestations of sexual impurity, yet have the root of the matter in them. And he appeals to these dynamics of saving grace: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19). He never once quotes the Seventh commandment there in 1 Corinthians 6. He could have, but instead he loads up Gospel motives and Gospel dynamics and brings them to bare like laser beams upon the hearts and minds of these Corinthians, confident that by God's grace this can put them back into the way of progressive growth in sexual purity.

Sexual sins are not unpardonable sins. I said it last week; I want to say it again. One of the most wonderful Gospel promises is found in a verse that the devil has used to terrify many. In dealing with the unpardonable sin, Jesus said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men" (Matthew 12:31). Yours run by you like a high-speed film upon the screen of the walls of your mind. All sin shall be forgiven. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). "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" (1 Corinthians 6:11). Whatever other means God may use--and there are many--in the actual working out of the dynamics of progressive sanctification, at the end of the day, we've got to keep going back to where we began: looking away unto Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith. May God help us by His grace.

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