

The Seventh Word: Committing Adultery Against Your Neighbor

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[0 : 00] Good morning, everyone. Let me, for those of you who don't know me, my name is Sean. I'm one of the pastors of Trinity Cambridge Church, and again, it's my joy and privilege to preach God's Word to you this morning. We've been going through a series in the book of Exodus, and we've been doing a short mini-series through the Ten Commandments, and so we're on the Seventh Commandment today. So if you'd open your Bibles with me to Exodus chapter 20, verse 14. If you don't have a Bible, if you raise your hand, we have some people who can bring a Bible along to you that you can use while you're here. Exodus chapter 20. Let me pray for the reading and preaching of God's Word. Heavenly Father, show us this morning that your commands are not only right, but that they are good, that they promote our flourishing, to captivate us this morning with the beauty of Christ, our Bridegroom, so we might be faithful to Him, that we as a church might be a bride that is holy, set apart for Him. Speak to us from your Word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

If you would please stand, if you're able, for the reading of God's Word. I'm not going to read the whole section. I'm going to read the prologue, verses 1 to 2, and then I'll skip over to verse 14, in our commandment for today. Exodus 20. And God spoke all these words, saying, I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

You shall not commit adultery. This is God's holy and authoritative Word. Please be seated. In an age of Tinder and Grindr and Ashley Madison, sexual flings are just a click away.

According to an article in the Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy, it estimates 50 to 60% of married men and 45 to 55% of married women commit adultery. That's nearly 50% of married women couples get divorced. And over 70% of second marriages end in divorce. That means marital infidelity affects nearly half of all couples. In light of such disheartening data, some so-called experts have given up on monogamy altogether. There was a feature article in the New York Times 2017 called, Is an Open Marriage a Happier Marriage? There are books like The New Monogamy or The Ethical Slut that encourage all forms of open relationships as long as it's consensual. In a TEDx video, which nearly has 4.5 million views, entitled Monogamish, The New Rules of Marriage, sexologist Jessica O'Reilly asserts that, quote, marriage is a failure in human design. And she continues, marriage can be restrictive in personal growth and even repressive in its demands of absolute monogamy. In any other realm, if we saw failure rates like we saw in marriage, we would do something about it. When anything doesn't work, we innovate.

So why do we accept monogamous marriage in its current form, despite its design flaws? The flaw in her logic is that she assumes that the fault lies with the institution of marriage rather than with the people who got married. Let me offer a comparison. The vast majority of students who start learning a musical instrument give up before attaining even a modest level of competency.

[4 : 05] But did it occur to anyone to tell these students that the problem is not their lack of self-control or perseverance, but the design flaws of the instruments?

That these musical instruments are a failure in human design? The fact that something isn't easy to do doesn't mean that it's not possible to do or that something is wrong with it. Plus, marriage is not even a human design. It's a divine design. If it doesn't work, it's because humans are broken and sinful, not because God made a mistake.

The so-called new monogamy is simply the old adultery. As G.K. Chesterton once quipped, fallacies do not cease to be fallacies because they become fashions. This is the teaching of the seventh word of the Decalogue. As the redeemed bride of Christ, we should flee adultery of the body and the heart. That's the main point. But in order to understand this commandment rightly, we need to first talk about what marriage is, and then we'll talk about what adultery is, and then finally about what the gospel is. So first, we need to understand what the marriage is, and in order to do that, we need to go back to the beginning. In Genesis 2, 18, God looks at the man that he has created, and he says this, it is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper fit for him.

So in the preceding account, if you're familiar with the Genesis creation account, you know that after each creative act, there's a refrain. God saw that it was good. So after creating the light, the sea, the plants, the sun, and the moon, and the stars, the birds, and the fish, and the land creatures, God says, I saw, he sees it, and he says it was good. But this is the first time in the creation narrative when God sees something, and he says, it is not good. It's not good that the man is alone. It's a jarring effect. In God's judgment, something was missing. The man's aloneness was not good. So he determined, I will make a helper fit for him. And the phrase fit for him is literally like opposite him. It expresses a sense of fittedness and complementarity, like hand that fits snugly into a glove. It fits into gloves precisely because the glove is hollow in the shape of a hand. It's opposite each other. Like interlocking gears with one turning, for you, counterclockwise, the other one turning clockwise. Like an interweaved pattern of threads that form an intricate pattern precisely because it's going in opposite directions. This pattern of complementarity runs through all of creation. That's why we see God separating and distinguishing his works of creation throughout

Genesis 1. The heavens and the earth, light from darkness, the waters below and the waters above, the dry land and the seas, seed-yielding plants and fruit-bearing plants, sun and the moon, the fish of the seas and the birds of the sky. And then finally he creates man and woman. Chapter 2, verses 9 to 20. It's kind of a cool scene to imagine. The narrative kind of reads like the first ever speed dating. All the animals pass in front of Adam. Adam takes a look, gives it a name, and then says, no. They pass through. Right. You could imagine Adam at the end of the line hanging his head and saying to God, God, all of these are marvelous creatures, so diverse in their beauty and glory that you have created, but none of them is for me. And so the Lord puts Adam to sleep, takes one of Adam's own ribs and shapes it into a woman and brings her to the man. The woman is a living creature like the other creatures, but she's also profoundly unlike the other living creatures because she has been taken from Adam's own body to be for him, to be by his side as his helper. So it is no wonder then that the man breaks out into spontaneous song and poetry the moment he lays his eyes on the woman. In Genesis 2.23, he says, this at last is bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. At last. Here is the one whom my heart desires. At last, here is one who is like me, who fits me, who understands me. At last, here is the one whom I can love and give myself to.

[9 : 18] This happy union between Adam and Eve is the first marriage. And so in Genesis 2.24-25, it says, therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife are both naked and were not ashamed. Why do you think it says, therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife? Because man and woman fulfill their creational destiny when she who was taken from the man is taken back to the man, and they become one flesh. Together, then and only then, can they fulfill the creational mandate to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it. The Bible elsewhere describes this marriage between a man and woman as a covenant, as it says in Malachi 2.14. Covenant is an oath-bound relationship. It is legally binding because it's bound with an oath, but it's also deeply relational and requires faithfulness, steadfast love. And marriage in particular is a covenant that God plays a decisive role in. So he says in Matthew 19, after quoting Genesis 2.24, it says, therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. Jesus explains it this way. He says, so they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. The state gives legal recognition to marriage. The pastor officiates the wedding. The couple takes their marriage vows, but none of them is ultimately responsible for making a man and a woman married. That's a divine prerogative. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer said in one of his wedding sermons from prison, quote, your love is your own private possession, but marriage is more than something personal. It is a status and office, just as it is the crown and not merely the will to rule that makes the king. So it is marriage and not merely your love for each other that joins you together in the sight of God and man. The fact that a man and woman love each other doesn't make them married. It's when God does something authoritatively and makes them and binds them as a couple that they are married.

And marriage is such a beautiful union, right? There's really nothing quite like it in all human relationships. It says in Genesis 2.25, and the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Yeah, this was before the fall. After Adam and Eve rebelled against God, in Genesis 3.7, they recognized their nakedness and they covered themselves with fig leaves to cover their shame. Ever since then, every human being has always worn clothes, at least the ones that have enough sense of shame.

Have you ever noticed that no animal ever covers itself with clothes? clothing is a human phenomenon because we uniquely feel the shame of alienation and nakedness that come from sin. But there is one place still left in all the world where a man and a woman may be naked and unashamed. In the act of sex. In the security and intimacy of a marriage covenant. The man and the woman are naked, like Adam and Eve once were. It is only in a biblical marriage where you know that your spouse is unreservedly for you and resolutely and exclusively committed to you till death do you part. It's only in that kind of biblical marriage where you are fully known to each other. All your foibles known. All your blemishes seen.

But still, where you have no fear at all of being repulsed or rejected. That's the one place where you can truly enjoy sex as God intended and be naked and unashamed.

[13 : 55] No sexual flame can ever come close to that. I've never heard of happily married, faithful Christian couples experiencing post-sex blues or as doctors call it, post-coital dysphoria.

Post-sex blues is what you feel after giving away what is so precious, your body, sex, at cut prices.

It's the guilt and shame and insecurity you feel after sharing something so intimate with someone you don't fully know or trust. It's what you feel because you're still carrying the pain and shame from having been violated sexually in the past.

Post-sex blues is a mark of sexual brokenness. And it reminds us that there's something better, something whole, something pure. All other forms of sex outside of biblical marriage are degrading counterfeits of that glorious union.

Now that we've discussed what marriage is and how precious it is, we can truly come to understand what adultery is. Adultery is forbidden not because God wants to deprive us of something good, but because he wants to preserve for us something good.

[15 : 25] We call the sexual act between a married person and another individual that is not his or her spouse adultery. Adultery is a breach of a sacred trust. It's a grievous betrayal of a person who has bared his body and heart and soul to you.

It shows contempt for the authority of God who makes marriages. It is selfish and short-sighted and it wrecks marriages. It wrecks families. It wrecks children's lives.

And in so doing, it does violence to the very building block of human society. And because of its sexual nature, adultery is particularly grievous in that it's a sin against one's own body.

Paul talks about how sexual sin is unique in that in 1 Corinthians 6, that it's a sin against one's own body. In marriage, the two become one flesh.

And he argues there that when a man has sex with a prostitute, he becomes one body with her. God designed sex to be an act that expresses and consummates the self-giving love between a husband and wife.

[16 : 42] That's why in 1 Corinthians 7, it commands husbands and wives to give each other their conjugal rights. For it says, the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does.

Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. The husband and wife belong to one another. They are not their own.

For this reason, to interpose a third party to this intimate relationship is to defraud one's spouse of what rightly belongs to him or her alone.

That's why we call it cheating. In Proverbs 5, it warns against adultery and it says, Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well.

Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets, let them be for yourself alone and not for strangers with you. Our cistern was basically a big water pit that people in ancient Israel used to store rainwater because it's a dried, arid climate.

[17 : 43] They don't get that much drinkable water, so they would save every drop of rain because it was precious to them. But a cistern was a private possession, unlike wells and springs that are out and about.

And so he's using this analogy. Imagine your cistern being broken open for any stranger walking by to sully and to defile and to drink with their mouths and their hands.

Have you ever had the experience of someone betraying your confidence and sharing your secret with strangers? Have you ever had someone take what is yours by right and give it away to someone else, to other people?

That's what happens in adultery. You're giving away what is not yours to give away because you belong to your spouse.

Some of you might think, well, I've never committed adultery, so I'm in the clear. But the seventh command goes beyond adultery. 1 Timothy 1, 8, 11, Paul describes how the law of God can still function in convicting the lawless and the disobedient.

[19 : 07] And he says, he lists the second half of the Ten Commandments in that list. He says the law is laid down for those who strike their fathers and mothers. That's the fifth commandment, right?

Honor your father and mother. And then he says for murderers, that's the sixth commandment, you shall not murder. The sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, that's all under the seventh commandment, you shall not commit adultery.

And then he says enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine. Enslavers refers to man stealing. That's the command. You shall not steal. Liars, you shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

He's going through one by one the Ten Commandments in this list. And he puts homosexuality, practicing homosexuality, and sexual immorality, which is a general umbrella term for all kinds of sexual sin, under the purview of the seventh commandment.

So that includes fornication and cohabiting, sex before marriage. That includes bestiality.

[20 : 20] That includes homosexuality. That includes incest. That includes prostitution. That includes sexual abuse. You may have noticed that while some of these are sins that are still condemned by the broader culture, some of them are not condemned by the culture anymore.

In fact, cohabiting with someone outside of marriage is not only widely accepted in our culture, it is often commended as wise by the world.

Same-sex relations are not merely condoned. They are now celebrated as courageous and authentic. If the strong language that the Bible uses to condemn these sins makes you squirm, if you can't bring yourself to condemn what God condemns in his word, then you might have become more worldly than you realize.

David F. Wells, theologian, writes in his book, *God in the Wasteland*, worldliness is what makes sin look normal in any age, and righteousness seem odd.

There's a pervasive worldliness among Christians nowadays when it comes to issues surrounding sex and sexuality.

[21 : 46] Pervasive. We've been so desensitized to sexual sin because we see it everywhere. On the billboards, on the checkout line, in the grocery store, in movies, in TV shows, social media.

Even at a cafe. But the word of God teaches us that any physical act that distorts or cheapens God's design for marriage, as laid out in Genesis 2, 24-25, is a violation of the seventh commandment.

And I want to reiterate that God gave us the seventh commandment not to deprive us of something good, but to preserve for us something good. Our culture has widely adopted Sigmund Freud's claim that sexual desire and sexual fulfillment are core aspects of what it means to be human.

In light of that perspective, anything that limits consensual sexual expression is seen as oppressive. But it's a folly to view the seventh commandment as restrictive and oppressive.

Imagine going to a theme park and riding a roller coaster, which I enjoy doing. It seems to me that the faster it goes, the better.

[23 : 07] The sharper it turns, the crazier it spins, the more you're upside down and turned about, the more fun, right? Anybody? Anybody?

Yes. But one key detail we must not forget is that a roller coaster never leaves its tracks.

In fact, if it ever gets derailed, you might think for a fleeting moment, oh, this is so fun, but it's the deadliest ride you've ever been on.

That's exactly what it's like to transgress God's law. Sin, no matter how pleasant its fleeting pleasures might seem, ultimately leads to death.

A roller coaster is enjoyable precisely because it never leaves its tracks. Likewise, sex is meant to be enjoyed within the guardrails of marriage.

[24 : 14] Well then, some people say, well, if I can have sex only in the context of marriage, then I'll just keep divorcing and remarrying. Jesus knew some people thought that way.

So when he's explaining the seventh commandment in Matthew 5, 29 to 30, he says this, everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

If you marry a divorced man or a woman, you are committing adultery. Not only that, if you divorce your wife so that she has little choice but to remarry, remember this command was given in a day and age when women were largely economically dependent on their husbands, then the husband is guilty of making his wife commit adultery, except when the wife has already committed adultery.

Then the husband is not guilty of making or commit adultery. I'm going a bit fast, but I hope you're following. This doesn't make any sense to us because if you're divorced, you're not married anymore, and if you're not married anymore, then you're eligible to marry, right?

That's how we think in our society, in our culture. Sleeping with a married man is adultery, but sleeping with a divorced man or a woman is not adultery, is it? Why is Jesus saying that it's adultery?

[25 : 47] 1 Corinthians 7, 39 explains, a wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives, but if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord, and vice versa.

Similarly, Romans 7, 1 to 3 says, do you not know, brothers, that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? For a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies, she is released from the law of marriage.

Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive, but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man, she is not an adulteress.

When a Christian is divorced from his or her spouse, even for legitimate and understandable reasons, remarriage to another man or a woman is not one of the options.

Because that constitutes adultery. The two viable options for you are then celibacy or reconciliation. And this is because while the marriage vows might be broken, the marriage bond cannot be broken.

[26 : 53] Because as we saw earlier, God, not man, makes marriages. And it's binding till death do you part. This is the consistent teaching of Jesus throughout the Gospels as we see in Mark 10, 11 and Luke 16, 18.

A disgruntled husband and wife can go around declaring themselves divorced all they want, but that doesn't actually make them divorced because only a judge can legally announce that.

Even more importantly, no husband or wife can actually sever the spiritual bond that God has formed. Only God can do that. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.

For this reason, serial marriages, divorce and remarriage, fall under the prohibition of the seventh commandment. Now this is getting harder and harder, isn't it?

Yeah. Some of you might think, well, I've been enjoying sex within marriage and I've never been divorced, so I'm in the clear. But the seventh commandment goes beyond mere physical acts.

[28 : 04] Jesus teaches us the spirit of the seventh commandment in Matthew 5, 27 and 28. He said, you have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery, but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Even if you never have sex with someone, you can commit adultery of the heart by lusting after someone. This is not the same thing as noticing a very attractive or provocatively dressed person.

There is a difference between being tempted and sinning. Hebrews 4, 15 says, even Jesus was tempted, but he was without sin.

He was tempted in every way just as we are, yet he did not sin. So there's a difference between temptation and sin. Let me illustrate this using the most famous example of adultery in scripture.

In 2 Samuel 11, 2, David was walking on the roof of the king's house and then he saw from the roof a woman bathing. It says the woman was very beautiful.

[29 : 14] Seeing Bathsheba and noticing that she is very beautiful are not sinful. That's a temptation. It's what happens next that's sinful.

David sent and inquired about the woman. Now he is fantasizing. David is inquiring, exploring possibilities.

He is committing adultery of the heart. And adultery of the heart unsurprisingly leads to adultery of the flesh. David sent messengers and took her.

And she came to him and he lay with her. When you notice an attractive man or a woman avert your eyes and stop yourself from fantasizing and lusting and lusting after him or her don't take a second look.

Watching porn is also tantamount to adultery of the heart. It doesn't matter that it's hentai or a pornified video game.

[30 : 20] It has the same adulterating effect on your heart and the same deadly consequences in your life. It draws your heart away from your spouse and away from God if you're single.

Single or married. According to a site that measures website metrics, three of the top 15 most trafficked websites in the world are porn sites. According to the data that Pornhub releases every year, in 2019 there were over 42 billion visits to Pornhub, an average of 115 million visits per day.

That's more visits than Netflix or Amazon. That's over a third of the entire U.S. population. That many people from all over the world are watching porn every single day.

One sociologist estimates that porn is a \$97 billion industry globally. According to Covenant Eyes which is a leading accountability software that records your interactivity and blocks porn on your web browsers, they say one in five mobile searches are for pornography.

One in five. 28,258 users are watching porn this very second. 51% of male students and 32% of female students first viewed porn before their teenage years.

[31 : 50] It's a myth that porn and masturbation are only an issue among men. 88% of scenes in porn films contain acts of physical aggression.

If you look at any porn that means the likelihood of you watching porn that involves physical aggression is very, very high. 68% of divorce cases involved one party meeting a new lover over the internet.

56% of divorce cases involved one party having an obsessive interest in pornographic websites. The situation is bleak in the church too.

One in five youth pastors, one in seven senior pastors use porn on a regular basis and are currently struggling. that's more than 50,000 U.S. church leaders.

64% of Christian men and 15% of Christian women say they watch porn at least once a month. If that statistic holds in our church, that means more than 25 men here right now and more than six women here right now look at porn every month.

[33 : 10] I don't say this to shame you but I want to remind you that you're not alone in this fight.

1 Corinthians 10, 13 reminds us no temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability but with the temptation he will also provide a way of escape that you may be able to endure it.

This is such a wonderful reminder to all who struggle with sexual temptation. All your temptations and sin struggles are common. No matter how kinky or deviant it might seem to you it's common.

So don't believe the enemy's lie that says you're the only one who struggles with this sin or that sin because that's his ruse to keep you isolated in shame so that you can never come out into the light to heal and grow.

And don't believe the enemy's lie that you can never overcome this sin that your sexual drive is too strong that this is an inevitable human struggle. That's how the enemy tries to make you stop fighting.

[34 : 41] But the word of God tells us that you are never tempted beyond your ability. Never. With every temptation God provides a way of escape.

There is a way of escape from sexual addiction and there are men and women in this room right now that can attest to God's deliverance. I'm one of them.

When I was 13 years old one of my friends thought he would do me a favor and introduce me to porn. It was the greatest disservice that a friend has ever done to me.

I was hooked immediately and struggled with sexual addiction for a little over a decade.

It felt at times like a hopeless struggle but I am thankful to report that it has been almost the same number of years now that I've been free from sexual addiction. God's grace.

[36 : 00] I know without a shadow of doubt that God can do the same for you. Here's some things that God's taught me about overcoming sexual sin from scripture that have been confirmed my experience over and over again and even if this is not one of your temptations that you regularly deal with I think this will be relevant for you because most of it is applicable to fighting any sin.

First number one cut off temptations. After teaching us that lusting after someone is tantamount to adultery of the heart Jesus continues in Matthew 5 if your right eye causes you to sin gouge it out and throw it away for it is better that you lose one of your members than your whole body to be thrown into hell and if your right hand causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away for it is better for you to lose one part of your body than for you to go into hell.

Jesus is not telling us to mutilate our flesh literally but he's using figurative speech to teach us to take decisive and radical action to remove things that cause us to commit adultery in the heart.

Literally gouging out your eye will not keep you from lusting. Let me give you one example the famous 20th century soul musician Ray Charles. He was blind but he openly admitted his obsession with women.

He was married and divorced twice had many many affairs and fathered a total of 12 children with 10 different women. He was blind. But what are the sources of temptation in your life that you can get rid of?

[37 : 44] If your smartphone causes you to sin get a dumb phone get rid of your internet disconnect it. People live without internet for thousands of years you can do it.

And if you really need it go to a public library or go to a school. Go to a school. Go to a school. If your boyfriend or girlfriend is causing you to sin break up no matter how dear that relationship is to you.

If there's a flirty co-worker that is tempting you ask to be moved to a different department or team or just quit and get a different job well but that's really inconvenient Sean of course it's inconvenient you think getting rid of a limb is convenient that's exactly the point that Jesus is making stop sheepishly apologizing to your accountability partners every single week while taking no decisive action do something about it if there's cancer in your bone if you're affected with gangrene or you have a serious infection that's not responding to antibiotics we would not hesitate to get our limbs amputated so that we can survive but when eternal life is at stake when we refuse to remove the things that cause us to sin in the same way that it happens with all kinds of addiction sexual addiction will increase your body's tolerance for sexual sin you'll have to descend lower and lower into more and more so that sins and you'll have to do it more and more frequently to get the same level of high it will ultimately lead you to ruin and death and God's word is clear 1st

Corinthians 6 9 to 10 Ephesians 5 5 everyone who is sexually immoral or impure or who is covetous has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God if you have come to terms with your sexual immorality if you have reached a cease fire if you stop fighting your sin killing your sin if you're no longer repenting of your sins turning away from your sins then you will not inherit the kingdom of God put to death therefore what is earthly in you sexual immorality impurity passion evil desire and covetousness which is idolatry says Colossians 3 5 cut it off put it to death that's violent language be violent with your sexual sin this is a life or death situation 17th century English theologian John Owen famously said be killing sin or sin will be killing you no

I'm not preaching works righteousness this is not legalism this is the word of God the very definition of a Christian is someone who turns from sin and turns toward Christ in faith if you're not turning away from your sins if you're not repenting you're not a follower of Christ repentance is not just regretting sin it's renouncing sin it's not just it's not about saying sorry for sin it's about saying no to sin I'm not saying that you can't struggle there will be a struggle because we have a real enemy the world the flesh and the devil they're real and they oppose us and they tempt us but you must never come to terms with sexual immorality that's the first tip number two cognize or be conscious of

[42 : 02] God's presence I know cognize is an odd word but I wanted to make everything start with C so you guys could remember it better and I didn't have time to come up with anything better cognize or be conscious of God's presence Proverbs 5 20 to 21 says why should you be intoxicated my son with a forbidden woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress for a man's ways are before the eyes of the Lord and he ponders all his paths why do you use incognito mode when watching porn why do you erase your search history why are you looking over your shoulder when you are going into that strip club because you want to hide your sin but you cannot hide your sin every single one of your thoughts and deeds are nakedly exposed before the all seeing eyes of God even darkness is as light with

God nothing obscures his vision remember when Peter insisted he wasn't going to deny Jesus and then he ends up denying Jesus three times and the third time while he's in the middle of denying Jesus he says in Luke that the Lord turned and looked at Peter and Peter went out and wept bitterly when your eyes and mind start to wander off when your searches on the browser start to wander off remember that Jesus is looking at you with the same knowing and loving eyes with which he looked at Peter third confess your sins to your brothers and sisters in Christ obviously use discretion it would be inappropriate to share certain details with a member of the opposite sex but confess specifically I would like to see every man and woman in our church who struggles with sexual sin confess it to a brother or sister in their community groups this week do it this week confess it why

James 5 16 exhorts us therefore confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be healed Proverbs 28 13 says whoever conceals their sins does not prosper but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy your instinct will be to preserve the status quo your reputation and your job and to keep things hidden but don't listen to your self preservationist instinct because it's actually self destructive Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes in his book Life Together sin wants to be alone with people it takes them away from the community the more lonely people become the more destructive the power of sin over them sin wants to remain unknown it shuns the light in the darkness of what is left unsaid sin poisons the whole being of a person in confession the light of the gospel breaks into the darkness and closed isolation of the heart sin must be brought into the light since the confession of sin is made in the presence of another

Christian the last stronghold of self justification is abandoned the sinner surrenders giving up all evil giving the sinner's heart to God and finding the forgiveness of all one sin in the community of Jesus Christ and other Christians sin that has been spoken and confessed has lost in the presence of another believer is the most profound kind of humiliation it hurts makes one feel small it deals a terrible blow to one's pride and that's precisely why it works and if you're still struggling as you're confessing confess it to a wider group of people fourth control your body first Thessalonians 4 3 to 5 for this is the will of God your sanctification that you abstain from sexual immorality that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor and not in the passion of lust like the

Gentiles who do not know God self control is about humbly accepting limits accepting limits that God has set around us instead of pushing against those boundaries so it takes humility and the key to self control is keeping the prize in view what you're going to be rewarded with why you're doing it in the first place first Corinthians 9 24 do you not know that it is in a race all the runners run but only one receives the prize so run that you may obtain it every athlete exercises self control in all things they do it to receive a perishable wreath but we the imperishable so I do not run aimlessly I do not box as one beating the air but I discipline my body and keep it under control lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified this is the key to self control it's not I've got to be more disciplined

[47 : 24] I gotta do more I gotta try harder that's not gonna make you more self controlled the key to self control is keeping your eyes on the prize we need to remember that we are gaining something far greater by missing out on illicit pleasures missing out on those we need to remember that we're gaining something our God is a jealous God and he will not give his glory to another another person he will not share the affection and allegiance that is owed to him with anything else so if we exercise self control and persevere in our faith and obedience till the end we get nothing less than God himself we will be united with Christ our Savior our King our bridegroom in the ecstasy of eternal love that's what we have to look forward to that's why we fight now that's why we persevere when

I was addicted to porn I noticed that my behavior often felt compulsive I had all my devices on lockdown so I essentially had no opportunity to sin so it was almost like I had you know but so whenever there was a crack in the armor like I'm traveling for example and there's a device that doesn't have an internet filter on it almost felt like I had no willpower at all just compulsive sin I was not abstaining from sexual immorality but being prevented from sexual immorality I was being controlled by internet filters but I had no self control so I did something counterintuitive and got rid of my internet filters one day and told my accountability partners about it people were closest to me and this helped me to build self control to build new habits of choosing obedience saying no to sin rather than just being unable to sin

I'm not saying that you should get rid of internet filters you should probably start with them but if you're never actually exercising self control but merely being prevented from sin that's not going to be a long term solution for you number five conjugate I'm having trouble with C's again don't conjugate verbs I'm using the word in its original sense to join together in a pair in marriage 1st Corinthians 7 8 to 9 to the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am but if they cannot exercise self control they should marry for it is better to marry than to burn with passion this is a very down to earth advice from the Bible if you're burning with sexual desire get married

I will tell you marriage is not going to correct your pattern habit of sexual sin by itself there are myriad married men and women who struggle with sexual sin but if you're doing all these other things that we're talking about today to fight sexual sin having a healthy appropriate outlet for your sexual desire can help Proverbs 5 says rejoice in the wife of your youth a lovely doe a lovely dear a graceful doe let her breast fill you at all times with delight be intoxicated always in her love and first Corinthians seven commands husbands wives not to deprive one another except by mutual agreement for the sake of prayer so if you're married except under special circumstances by mutual agreement you should be having sex regularly but if you're not married but burning with passion conjugate get married and if you're not able to get married at this time don't worry you can still exercise self control and abstain from sexual immorality it's possible number six and this is my most important exhortation to you is cling to

Christ none of the things I've said so far will work if you're not doing this this brings me to my final point is what the gospel is do you feel guilty ashamed and exposed because you've broken the seventh commandment times without number maybe you feel like the woman who was caught in adultery in John chapter 8 some scribes and Pharisees caught this woman in the act of adultery and dragged her into the town square brought her into the middle of a crowd that Jesus was teaching and then they said to Jesus teacher this woman has been caught in the act of adultery now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such woman what do you say imagine the shame she's I'm caught now no one's going to look at me the same way again

[53 : 02] I'm going to be a pariah in my society in my neighborhood imagine her guilt and fear I'm about to be stoned to death and that is exactly what I deserve the gavel is about to drop do you feel that way then look at how Jesus responds in John 8 he stood up and said to them let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her but when they heard it they went away one by one beginning with the older ones and

Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him Jesus stood up and said to her woman where are they has no one condemned you and she said no one Lord and Jesus said neither do I condemn you go and from now on sin no more how can Jesus be so merciful we've talked about how grievous the sin adultery is how can Jesus be so merciful because Jesus is the bridegroom as Ephesians 5 says as the book of Hosea says Jesus is the bridegroom and the church the people of God is his bride we have all sinned against him we have all cheated on him we have whored after idols given our love and affection and allegiance and loyalty to someone other than our bridegroom

Jesus Christ to our God we have all done that and that's why Jesus came and that's why Jesus went to the cross because he knew we needed to die he knew that's what we deserve but he said no I want my bride for myself I want to save and redeem my bride for myself so I will die the death of an adulterer that she might live this is the key the gospel clinging to Christ this is the key to holiness in this if you keep trying to justify yourself trying to make yourself right before

God to get a little holier you're just trying to put this dirty tattered rag of your own righteousness to cover your shame and you cannot cover it it only makes you look more pitiful your righteousness will never be adequate the key is to go to Christ alone Jesus I have nothing naked I come to thee for clothes clothe me with your own righteousness Jesus so that that can be my confidence in my relationship with you that's the only key I pray this is the start of a new season in your life if you've been struggling with sexual sin for a while our bridegroom is waiting for us for a holy bride set apart for him let's pray

God what can we say about your mercy we cannot help but sing we cannot help but extol your grace we cannot help but run to you Lord Jesus our husband our savior because only in you there is eternal life only in you there is forgiveness of sin only in you we can be declared righteous we can be sanctified thank you for your love in Jesus name we pray amen we to