

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, 2-9-14 AM NOTES
"THE IDOL OF SEX"
VARIOUS SCRIPTURES
#3 in Series, "Idol Wars"

Genesis 22:1a (NKJV) "Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham..."

Genesis 22:2b (NKJV) "...your son, your only *son* Isaac, whom you love..."

Genesis 22:12b (NKJV) "...for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only *son*, from Me."

2 Timothy 4:2a (NKJV) "Preach the word!"

"Christians have no right to be embarrassed when it comes to talking about sex and sexuality. An unhealthy reticence or embarrassment in dealing with these issues is a form of disrespect to God's creation. Whatever God made is good, and everything God made has an intended purpose that ultimately reveals His own glory. When conservative Christians respond to sex with ambivalence or embarrassment, we slander the goodness of God and hide God's glory which is intended to be revealed in the right use of creation's gifts."
—Al Mohler

I. The Perversion of Sex

"Human sex trafficking is the most common form of modern-day slavery. Estimates place the number of its domestic and international victims in the millions, mostly females and children enslaved in the commercial sex industry for little or no money. The terms *human trafficking* and *sex slavery* usually conjure up images of young girls beaten and abused in faraway places, like Eastern Europe, Asia, or Africa. Actually, human sex trafficking and sex slavery happen locally in cities and towns, both large and small, throughout the United States, right in citizens' backyards. It is the fastest-growing business of organized crime and the third-largest criminal enterprise in the world."
—FBI Website

Romans 6:19 (NASB) "...slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness..."

1 Timothy 1:15a (NKJV) "This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..."

2 Samuel 13:2 (ESV) "And Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her."

2 Samuel 13:5 (NKJV) "So Jonadab said to him, 'Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill. And when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and give me food, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see *it* and eat it from her hand.'"

2 Samuel 13:15 (NKJV) "Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred with which he hated her *was* greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, 'Arise, be gone!'"

II. The Purpose of Sex

Sex within the commitment of a covenant marriage is God's gift to a man and woman.

A. Procreation

Genesis 1:27-28 (NKJV) "27 So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. 28 Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

B. A Demonstration of Oneness

Genesis 2:24 (NKJV) “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

“It is the fusion of two hearts, the union of two lives, the coming together of two tributaries, which, after being joined in marriage will flow in the same channel in the same direction...carrying the same burdens of responsibility and obligation.”
—Peter Marshall

C. Pleasure

Proverbs 5:18-19 (NKJV) “¹⁸ Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. ¹⁹ As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love.”

1 Corinthians 7:32-33 (NASB) “³² But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; ³³ but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife.”

III. The Response to the Idol of Sex

Colossians 3:1-4 (NASB) “¹ Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.”

Romans 6:6 (HCSB) “For we know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that sin’s dominion over the body may be abolished, so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin.”

Galatians 2:20a (NKJV) “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...”

Colossians 3:5 (NASB) “Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to ... idolatry.”

Romans 6:11 (NASB) “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

“Knowing the supremacy of Christ enlarges the soul so that sex and its little thrills become as small as they really are... Therefore, the deepest cure to our pitiful addictions is not any mental strategies...The deepest cure is to be intellectually and emotionally staggered by the infinite, everlasting unchanging supremacy of Christ in all things.”
—John Piper

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#3 in Series, “Idol Wars”

Review: Thus far we have looked at “Foundational Truths for Idol Warfare” and “The Idol of Success”. To introduce today’s message, I want us to read Genesis 22:1-5; 9-14 [Read].

Why would God make such a request of Abraham? We know that this provides a tremendous type or illustration of Abraham's greater descendent – Jesus Christ, a direct descendent of Abraham according to the flesh – but there was another purpose that had to do with Abraham. **Genesis 22:1a (NKJV)** “Now it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham...” What was God testing? He was testing Abraham's faith because all of the promises of a coming deliverer, the Messiah, were tied up in Isaac and his descendents. At this point Isaac had no descendents. But I believe that there was also another test. Think of the love that Abraham had for his son – the son of his old age, the miraculous and only son of Abraham by his beloved wife, Sarah. God doesn't just refer to Isaac as one of Abraham's sons; He calls him in **Genesis 22:2b (NKJV)** “...your son, your only *son* Isaac, whom you love...” Abraham's affection had become adoration. It seems to imply that Isaac had, or was in danger of becoming the center of Abraham's life. If Isaac had or would have become the center of Abraham's life, then he would have become an idol. God tests Abraham. He was not implying that it was wrong to love his son; He was saying that if his son had taken the central place in his life, he had become an idol. This test was not for God to find out whether or not Isaac had become an idol; it was to reveal to Abraham whether or not God was still the center, the consuming desire of his life. Did Abraham love God supremely? As we have seen in the first two messages in this series, an idol can be a bad, sinful thing, or an idol can be a good thing that has been elevated to the place that only God should occupy.

In the end, Abraham passed the test. We read in **Genesis 22:12b (NKJV)** “...for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only *son*, from Me.” The fear of God as it is used in this context refers to being wholly yielded and surrendered to God. God is saying, “Now I know that you love me supremely; your love for me is above every other love”. The point is that if Abraham had loved his son more than God, Isaac would have been an idol. I think that periodically we need to have an “Abraham – Isaac test”. Are you willing to put the things most dear to you on the altar and take your hand off and confess that they belong to God, and because you fear God and love Him supremely, He can take them away or give them back to you as He chooses? This is nothing to take lightly! Do you love Him more than your spouse, children, grandchildren, friends, ministry, retirement funds, health, vocation, more than your _____? You fill in the blank. Wait, before you despair. When your love for, desire for, and devotion to God is first with no rivals, you will be a better spouse, parent, employee, etc. But you are also confessing that God is sovereign and you submit to His ways even when they are hard. I hope you are seeing that this stuff we call idolatry has a universal application; everyone is tempted with it. Our God is a jealous God and He will tolerate no rivals. He knows that our joy and eternal well being are dependent on our desiring and delighting in Him above all else and worshipping Him with no rivals.

Today, we are focusing on how sex can become an idol in any life. This is a subject that I don't relish talking about in such a public way. I remember a scathing email I received from a man who was in a service where I said some very basic and thoroughly biblical things about sex that came up in the passage I was preaching on. He was furious that I said these things in a setting where his child (I think he said she was 9) was sitting with him. I want to be sensitive to things like that, and that is why we probably went overboard on warnings to parents (this is not an “x-rated” message). The easy thing to do would be to just skip over difficult topics. I cannot do that because I believe that idols are a major problem in the lives of the members of this church and I am compelled to obey the command of **2 Timothy 4:2a (NKJV)** “Preach the word!” I ran across something that Al Mohler wrote that affirms the decision to preach on hard topics like this. “Christians have no right to be embarrassed when it comes to talking about sex and sexuality. An unhealthy reticence or embarrassment in dealing with these issues is a form of disrespect to God's creation. Whatever God made is good, and everything God made has an intended purpose that ultimately reveals His own glory. When conservative Christians respond to sex with ambivalence or embarrassment, we slander the goodness of God and hide God's glory which is intended to be revealed in the right use of creation's gifts.” [Quoted in John Piper and Justin Taylor, *Sex and the Supremacy of Christ*, page 14].

I. The Perversion of Sex

Perhaps the reason that such a perverted view of sex reigns in our nation is because the pulpits of Bible believing churches have been silent. The world certainly isn't silent, but neither is the Word of God! Sex and sexuality now drive most of our advertising and entertainment. There seems to be few areas of modern culture that is not permeated with sexuality. The culture as a whole believes that Bible believing Christians think that sex is evil and we are even ashamed of the fact that it is a necessary act to have all the children we have. The culture has so saturated itself with sex that it has become possibly the number one idol in the USA. That statement gives me great pain to even state. The problem with this idol (as with every idol) is that it can't deliver. Perhaps the two clearest indicators of how we have perverted sex is the pornography industry and the drastic increase in sexual slavery. The first no doubt leads to the second. One estimate I found is that there are about 4 million porn sites on the internet. One month, one porn site had 6 million hits! Porn sites get more visitors than Netflix, Amazon, and Twitter combined [The Huffington Post, 1-29-14]. Pornography is now the 7th largest industry in America. A shocking statistic is that while pornography still has primarily a male audience, there is an increasing number of women who are becoming addicted.

Make no mistake that it is pornography that drives the increasing abomination of sexual slavery. For some of you sexual slavery is not even something you are familiar with. Let me give you some information off the FBI website: "Human sex trafficking is the most common form of modern-day slavery. Estimates place the number of its domestic and international victims in the millions, mostly females and children enslaved in the commercial sex industry for little or no money. The terms *human trafficking* and *sex slavery* usually conjure up images of young girls beaten and abused in faraway places, like Eastern Europe, Asia, or Africa. Actually, human sex trafficking and sex slavery happen locally in cities and towns, both large and small, throughout the United States, right in citizens' backyards. It is the fastest-growing business of organized crime and the third-largest criminal enterprise in the world."

Make no mistake. This perverted obsession with sex is sin, but it is also an idol that is worshipped. It involves the laying of one's self on the altar of an idol who only wants to consume the worshipper. Here is the sad thing. In **Romans 6:19 (NASB)** speaks of sin making us "...slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness..." This god of sex never satisfies. It leaves us always wanting more. Some call this an addiction that has no cure, but in reality it is idolatry that does have a cure because idolatry is sin – a root sin and the Bible says in **1 Timothy 1:15a (NKJV)** "This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners..." If it is seen as a sickness, there is no hope for a cure. While sexual sin leaves you hungry for more, often it is not more of the same thing. There is the law of diminishing returns and that means that it takes more and more and step by step it often leads to perversion that I wouldn't even describe. People do not go to the gross perversion in one step; it is step by step, progressively heading for grotesque, dangerous, and demeaning acts. All the while the one behind all of the idols – Satan himself – is laughing and rejoicing over another captive.

Not only does the Bible give us God's plan for sex, it also gives us examples of the high cost of perverting the God-intended plan for sex. Immediately, I think of Samson and how sexual idolatry cost him his life. I think of Judah and his visit to a woman he thought was a prostitute and the damage and shame that visit caused when it was revealed that the woman was actually the widow of his dead son. But perhaps the saddest story involving the perversion of God's beautiful gift involves two of King David's children. It is not a very well known story. The two characters in this account are David's son Amnon and David's daughter by another woman – the daughter's name was Tamar. **2 Samuel 13:2 (ESV)** "And Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her." Other versions translate that word "tormented" "obsessed", "frustrated", and "distressed". I think that the best translation is probably "obsessed". It was a sexual obsession. He was obsessed with lust for Tamar. Amnon had an unscrupulous cousin (Jonadab) who hatched a plan for Amnon to fulfill his sinful lust. **2 Samuel 13:5 (NKJV)** "So Jonadab said to him, 'Lie down on your bed and pretend to be ill. And when your father comes to see you, say to him, 'Please let my sister Tamar come and give me food, and prepare the food in my sight, that I may see *it* and eat it

from her hand.” Amnon followed his wicked cousin’s advice and when Tamar came, he forced her against her will to fulfill his lustful, perverted desires. The result of that sexual idolatry and the resulting rape brought about some unexpected results that we need to learn from. After fulfilling his lust, the Bible says in **2 Samuel 13:15 (NKJV)** “Then Amnon hated her exceedingly, so that the hatred with which he hated her *was* greater than the love with which he had loved her. And Amnon said to her, ‘Arise, be gone!’” The god of sex cannot deliver. When something good becomes a god, it never delivers the pleasure it promises. When we chase some forbidden pleasure – becoming obsessed with it – it never satisfies and always leaves us empty. Let me give a word of counsel for the women here – especially the single ones. When a man pressures you to give in to his desires and tells you he loves you, he loves you like a person who says “I love oranges” and then sucks all the juice out of it and throws it in the trash and then says, “I love oranges”. He doesn’t love you; he loves himself. If you fulfill his lust you will find only disappointment. Tamar was devastated and shamed and now Amnon hated her. The sad story doesn’t end there. Tamar told her brother Absalom what happened and he began to burn with rage and a spirit of vengeance. Absalom patiently waited to take revenge on his brother. Two years later Absalom killed his brother Amnon in revenge for what he had done to his sister. David then punished Absalom and eventually Absalom rebelled against his father David and almost took over the kingship. David still loved Absalom, but in the rebellion against his father’s forces, he was killed. All of that turmoil and a nation split in civil war because of the sexual idolatry of Amnon. When sex becomes an idol, when it is used in a way that is perverted from God’s plan, there are some awful and devastating consequences.

II. The Purpose of Sex

Some are surprised that sex is God’s idea. It is a gift from God Himself. It is just as inaccurate to say that all sex is sin as it is to all sex is good. In some ways sex is like fire. Is fire good or bad? The answer depends on where the fire is. If the fire is in the fireplace on a cold winter night it is a good thing. If it is climbing up the curtains and the walls in your home it is a bad thing. Sex within the commitment of a covenant marriage is God’s gift to a man and woman. It is blessed by God and pleases God. Sex outside of that covenant marriage is sin and leads to devastating consequences. You may say, “That is oversimplifying a complicated subject”, and my response would be, “You are overcomplicating a simple subject.” Sex in marriage is good and God’s gift to a husband and wife; sex outside marriage is sin and unrepented of it can lead to idolatry. I know that this view of sex (which is the biblical view) is hopelessly out of touch with the culture we are in, but I have a question for you. How is it working in our culture? I rest my case!

I believe that there are several purposes given in Scripture for sex within a covenant marriage between a man and a woman. The following purposes are not necessarily in the order of importance.

A. Procreation

Genesis 1:27-28 (NKJV) “²⁷ So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. ²⁸ Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’” Just as He did with food, God made procreation (having children) pleasurable. After all, he could have created us to only eat tofu, but look at the amazing varieties of tasty food He has given us to meet our fuel needs to keep the body going. God could have made reproduction some kind of joyless, mechanical act. Instead, He made it pleasurable.

B. A Demonstration of Oneness

The gift of sex that God gives to a husband and wife is not just for procreation. It is a physical act that demonstrates a spiritual reality. **Genesis 2:24 (NKJV)** “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Sex between a husband and wife is the physical demonstration of their oneness of body and soul. The well known preacher of a couple of generations ago, Peter Marshall stated the truth of oneness like this: “It is the fusion of two hearts, the union of two lives, the coming together of two tributaries, which, after being joined in marriage will flow in the same channel in the same direction... carrying the same burdens of responsibility and obligation.”

[Quoted in Chuck Swindoll, *Strike the Perfect Match*, page 33]. Oneness involves a true knowing of one another. It is interesting that “knowing” is used to refer to the sexual act numerous times in Scripture. **Genesis 4:1 (NKJV)** “Now Adam **knew** Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain...”

C. Pleasure

God gives to His children good things for them to enjoy. When we read the little book “Song of Solomon” we see that sex is for the exciting pleasure of a husband and wife. God emphasized the importance of pleasure in marriage in numerous ways. **Proverbs 5:18-19 (NKJV)** “¹⁸ Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice with the wife of your youth. ¹⁹ As a loving deer and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; And always be enraptured with her love.” I don’t think that needs any commentary on my part.

* Let me say a word here about singleness. There are some special blessings associated with singleness in the Bible. God is our ultimate pleasure. The pleasure of being totally committed and surrendered to Him is a great pleasure – just as strong as married pleasures, but in a much different way. You need not feel that you are somehow handicapped. Christ really can meet those needs that you wrongly think can only be met through a spouse. The Bible actually teaches that you have advantages in some ways over those who are married. In **1 Corinthians 7:32-33 (NASB)** the Apostle Paul (who was single) said, “³² But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; ³³ but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife”. Take advantage of your singleness to focus on God and His plan for using you as His ambassador where you are.

III. The Response to the Idol of Sex

I will probably say this every week in this series, but that is because it is essential. Idols must not JUST be torn down; they must be replaced! Someone has accurately said, “The human heart is an idol factory.” If you tear down the idol of sex and don’t replace it with the one true God, it is absolutely certain that you will replace it with another idol. The new idol may be more socially acceptable, but it will be just as evil and dangerous as the one it replaced. As I said in the first message in this series, I believe that the solution to idolatry is best summarized in **Colossians 3:1-4 (NASB)** “¹ Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.” At salvation we are united to Christ in such a way that the Bible declares us to be “in Christ”. In Him, we not only have a new future, we have a new past in the sense that the old us that was enslaved to sin has been nailed to the cross with Christ. **Romans 6:6 (HCSB)** “For we know that our old self was crucified with Him in order that sin’s dominion over the body may be abolished, so that we may no longer be enslaved to sin”. **Galatians 2:20a (NKJV)** tells us “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...” We can, in Christ, now allow Christ to live in and through us. Christ delights not only in being our Savior and Lord; Colossians 3:4 tells us that He is also our life. Colossians 3:5 tells us that because we are no longer enslaved by that power of indwelling sin, we can now **Colossians 3:5 (NASB)** “Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to ... idolatry.” The word “consider” means to count as true by faith because God says it is true! This is not some high theological concept that has no practical benefit. This is daily life. I consider or reckon myself dead to the sin of sexual idolatry and that Christ is my life and I choose moment by moment to allow Him to be my life – the one who empowers me, the one who lives His life through me to enable me to live a life that consistently says “no” to sin and “yes” to whatever pleases God. **Romans 6:11 (NASB)** “Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.” This is a life that enthrones Christ, worships Him and walks in an ever-deepening love relationship with Him. John Piper summarizes well what this walk with Christ as our life results in. “Knowing the supremacy of Christ enlarges the soul so that sex and it’s little thrills become as small as they really

are... Therefore, the deepest cure to our pitiful addictions is not any mental strategies... The deepest cure is to be intellectually and emotionally staggered by the infinite, everlasting unchanging supremacy of Christ in all things.” [John Piper, *Sex and the Supremacy of Christ*, pages 43-44]. This is the only strategy that works for the pulling down of the idol of sex or any idol.