

The Divine Antidote to Sexual Impurity #1

Antidote to Sexual Impurity

By Albert N. Martin

sermonaudio.com

Preached on: Sunday, November 14, 1999

Trinity Baptist Church

160 Changebridge Road
Montville, NJ 07045

Website: www.trinitymontville.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tbcnj

Many of us are familiar with those words found in Acts 1:8 where the Lord Jesus says to his disciples, "You shall receive power, the Holy Spirit coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth." Ten days later, that promise was fulfilled. On the day of Pentecost in the language of scripture, when that day had fully come, the Lord Jesus Christ sent from heaven the Holy Spirit in power upon the gathered disciples, attesting his own role as the messianic king for Pentecost was nothing less than that to Jesus, and equipping the disciples to become his witnesses. And as the gospel went out from Jerusalem and then in the surrounding area of Judea and then up to Samaria, eventually in that first century, it did reach what was then understood as the uttermost part of the earth, and as that gospel penetrated what is commonly called Greco-Roman society in the first century, that is, a society that had been shaped previously by Greek thought and culture and presently by Roman thought and culture in the light of the Roman conquest of the then known world, it came into a society steeped in the horrible moral degeneration which is always the handmaiden of idolatry.

Some of you when reading the Old Testament may wonder why in the world did God have to put such shocking prohibitions in the book of Leviticus and in other segments of Old Testament law warning his people against sins that are so base and so ugly, chapters that we have blushed almost to read in public? Well, it's for the simple reason that those Canaanitish nations in the land into which Israel was to go with the blessing of God, having been steeped for centuries in idolatry, had sunk into the most base and ugly forms of sin and rebellion against God. When we turn to the New Testament, we find in Romans 1:18-32 a condensed R-rated litany of the kinds of sins that were prevalent in the social fabric of most of the Greco-Roman world.

We got a little glimpse of it when we were studying 1 Peter when Peter reminds his readers in chapter 4, verses 3 and 4, of the kind of lifestyle that marked many of them prior to their conversion to Christ. Prominent among those sins that were the handmaiden of the idolatry in Canaan against which God warned his people, prominent among the sins listed in Romans 8:18-32, prominent among the sins in that distilled description of the degeneracy of pagan society in 1 Peter 4, are the sins of sexual impurity, and it is for this reason that the New Testament records specific and repeated instructions on the subject of how the people of God are to maintain sexual purity in the midst of societies

that have become a veritable cesspool of sexual impurity and uncleanness. In fact, the social conscience of most of these places where the churches had been established was so battered and distorted and desensitized that when a circular letter was sent out from the apostles at Jerusalem, they had to explicitly forbid the practice of fornication among the churches.

Now if you doubt that, I've quoted or given a summary of crises of the other passages but turn to Acts 15 with me, if you will, for a moment. You'll remember the disciples, not the disciples, the apostles have gathered together to hear the concern that is voiced by Paul and Barnabas, who, while they were ministering in Antioch, became aware that some were teaching that you needed to be circumcised and become a kosher Jew to be a full-pledged Christian, and we read in verse 22 of Acts 15, "Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men out of their company, and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren." And these men are going to take back to those churches and to other churches the mind of the apostles there at Jerusalem and this circular letter is going to be delivered to the churches.

Read on with me, "and they wrote thus by them, The apostles and the elders, brethren, unto the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greeting." That's what we might call north of Palestine moving upward and then over into that section we've come to know as Asia Minor, Turkey now. The gospel had been spreading out to the uttermost parts of the earth, and now in these churches comprised primarily of Gentiles, this statement is authorized to be normative among the churches, "it seemed good unto us, having come to one accord, to choose out men and send them unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who themselves by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things," 1, "that ye abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication." In the list of things that pertain to what we would call matters indifferent, they have to articulate a prohibition against fornication, "from which if ye keep yourselves, it shall be well with you. Fare ye well."

Now as I was mentioning to two of my fellow elders prior to the service, as a young Christian I used to read this and be greatly troubled and say to myself, "Lord, it doesn't make sense. Everybody knows that Christians aren't supposed to fornicate." I could not relate to this passage. I believed it, I believed it was the word of God, I believed the apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit as they thrashed out this whole issue of whether or not Gentiles needed to be circumcised and become kosher Jews in order to be saved, but I simply could not relate to the fact that they felt constrained to add, "you must abstain from fornication." It no longer seems strange to me when I read it. It no longer seems strange because in a tragic way the climate of our so-called Western civilization has sunk to depths only paralleled by some of those societies against which God was warning his ancient covenant people in many of those prohibitions with respect to some of the basic forms of sexual impurity and uncleanness, the things that Paul listed in

Romans 1, and the things which apostles had to address explicitly in 1 Corinthians 5, 1 Corinthians 6, 1 Thessalonians 4, Hebrews 13, Romans 13, 1 Peter 2. Passage after passage in which explicit directives are given that the people of God are to seek by the grace of God and by the power and dynamics of gospel grace to maintain sexual purity.

But since we have as part of this society that is steeped in neo-paganism and religious apostasy come to days in which the atmosphere around us drips with impurity and uncleanness and since God says we are not to be conformed to this age, we are not to let the world squeeze us into its mold, but we are to be transformed by the renewing of our minds that we may prove what is the good, acceptable and perfect will of God, and believe it or not, since it has been 14 ½ years since I addressed the subject of sexual purity in a two or three message series, I've been constrained for several Lord's Day evenings to take up this subject with you, "The Divine Antidote to Sexual Impurity." And my purpose, I trust, has been made clear, and I trust none of you has any reservation that it is right and proper to do this, for when we open our Bibles and read the letters which would have been read in the mixed assembly of God's people with children present, 1 Corinthians 5, 6, 1 Thessalonians 4, and when we realize that God mandated under the old covenant that the statute laws be read every so often to the entire congregation of God's people, I trust none of us has a kind of carnal fastidiousness that makes us feel uncomfortable when these matters are addressed in a biblical, chaste and God-honoring manner.

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

Proposition 1. Our sexuality, including our desire and capacity for sexual pleasure, originates with God and not with the devil. Our sexuality, including our desire and capacity for sexual pleasure, originates with God and not with the devil. This is the absolute baseline starting point without which no thinking will end up where it ought to end.

Some of you have had the experience of having your mind somewhere else when you went to button up your shirt or button up a dress with 10-15 buttons, and so you started and you got all the way to the end and you made a very disrupting discovery, you got the first button in the wrong buttonhole, and though all the other buttons went into holes, when you go to the end you found you were one button short or one button too many. You started at the wrong place and everything you built on that wrong start was out of line, it was skewed. Well, in the same way when we come to think about the whole question of how can I as a Christian stand in the midst of this moral cesspool and be a pure man, a pure woman, a pure boy, a pure girl, in this area of my sexuality, my sexual desires and capacities and appetites. Well, I submit to you, you'll not be able to do it unless you start here. Your sexuality and mine, including our desire and capacity for sexual pleasure, originates with God and not with the devil.

This, of course, takes us right back to Genesis 1 and 2, so I ask you to turn there with me, if you will, please. Genesis 1 gives us the broad overview of God's creative activity in six days. On that sixth day we read, verse 27, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." Sexual distinctions are an outworking of the mind and will and wisdom of Almighty God. He is making man in his own image and he makes that image-bearer male and female, and included within the maleness and femaleness were these realities of the capacity for and the desire for sexual pleasure. This is how God made them.

Verse 28, "And God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth." And as the fruition of their commitment to each other and their engagement in sexual intimacy, they would bear children, they would be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and fulfill their God-given mandate.

And when God looks down upon all that he has made, look what he says in verse 31, "And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." As we shall see as we look at the zoom lens of the creation of man and woman, we back off for a minute now with just Genesis 1 in front of us and we see God, as it were, sitting back, looking upon the work of his hands including the creation of man male and female with the capacity to be fruitful and to multiply, and with the desire for that relationship that will result in fruitfulness and multiplication, not with some kind of a horrible burden imposed upon them against their nature and against their desire, but with all of the latent sexual capacity and desire and the ability for sexual pleasure, and God looks upon it and said, "It is all very good." And he didn't say, "except this sex business." God didn't say that and you must not say that, and you must not think that.

Come now into Genesis 2. Not a contradictory account but the broad stroke account of Genesis 1 is supplemented with God's account of that crowning work of his created wisdom and power, the creation of man. And after he creates the man and we have more details of how God did that here in chapter 2, we read in verse 15, "And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it." God took the man he had made and he put him in the circumstance in which he was to accomplish

the task assigned to him. Work was not something that came in after the fall. Work was a noble enterprise flowing out of God's creative design and his express will for man, his image-bearer. God was a worker, he makes man in his image to be a worker. He puts him into the garden to dress and to keep it.

Now we read in verse 18, "And the Lord said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a help meet," that is, "a help answering to him. Out of the ground the Lord formed every beast of the field, and every bird of the heavens; and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them: and whatsoever the man called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And the man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the heavens, and to every beast of the field; but for man," for Adam, "there was not found a help meet," suitable, "answering to him." No doubt as the various animals were paraded before Adam and with a mind untainted and uncrippled by sin, Adam is able to make an analysis of the size and shape and function of that animal. Giving the name was not just giving some kind of a convenient verbal tag, it was identifying the significance of that animal, its significance in contrast to other animals. And Adam names them but in all of the naming, in all of the analysis of their unique characteristics and functions and their place in God's world, there was nothing in all that Adam surveyed and name that answered peculiarly to his need as creature made in the image of God. He had eyes to see the animals, the animals could look back maybe with the dumb blank stare of the cow, maybe the intimidating look of a lion, but in the eyes of neither cow nor lion nor any other creature was there that which spoke of a soul and a mind with which Adam could communicate, no helper answering to his need. And whatever the animal was in its muscularity or in its furriness or softness, there was not among all the animals that which Adam would instinctively hold to his bosom as one of his own kind. He's conscious that the animals have sight and they have hearing and they have mobility, many characteristics that he as image-bearer of God has, but in all of that there is no creature that answers to his need.

One wonders what kind of language Adam spoke. I don't know. I don't know what kind of language used when he spoke to Adam. "Adam, where are you?" But we can imagine that Adam may have sought to communicate and he talks to a dumb beast and the beast may look at him with a blank stare but there's no language coming back, there's no communication of mind and of soul, and Adam is brought to feel very keenly in the midst of all of the profuseness of God's creative genius, there's nothing answering to my need.

So what does God say? God takes the initiative and says, "It is not good that the man should be alone, alone amidst all the beauty that I've made, alone amidst all the animals I've made. I will make a helper meet or answering to him." So how does God do it? Verse 21, "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man," the first incident of anesthesiology in human history. God put him to sleep, "And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof: and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from the man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And the man said," now think what this must have meant for Adam. I don't know how many hours he has spent with the animals parading by, and he comes to that conviction, "There's none of these that answer to my deepest

needs," not knowing that God has pronounced it is not good for him to be alone. The next thing he knows is he awakens from a deep sleep and there in front of him the moment his eyes are cast upon her, he says, "Aha, there's the one answering to my need." And so he exclaims, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh," and he doesn't hesitate giving her a name, "she shall be called Isha for she was taken out of Man," out of Ish. "She is my counterpart, like me but separate from me. In many ways, she is a mirror image of me but she has her own image that is mirrored back to me. She is bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, she shall be called Woman, Isha, because she was taken out of man. Therefore," now whether Adam said this or this is God's pronouncement later on, it's irrelevant to our understanding here, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." And now we're back to straightforward history, "And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."

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

Now I ask you, do you feel comfortable with God's account of how he did it or do you feel a little squeamish? I find it a good test. Ask yourself the question: do I feel comfortable with this, that Almighty God as established this, not the devil? Well, you say, "Pastor, why is that so critical?" Well, for a number of reasons but in my understanding this is most basic, it is demonic to demean and to deprecate what God has created and to consider unclean or suspicious what Almighty God has made noble and glorious.

I want you to turn to 1 Timothy 4. So again, you realize this is not Pastor Martin taking off on a flourish of rhetorical excess when I say it is demonic to demean and deprecate what God has created and to consider it unclean. Paul is warning Timothy about certain influences that will crop out and he ought to be aware of them in his ministry. "The Spirit says expressly," 1 Timothy 4:1, "that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits," now notice, "doctrines of demons." Behind the doctrines that emerge and will seek to infiltrate the church are unseen but very real demonic powers. That's what Paul says to Timothy, "through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies," demons are behind the doctrines, the instruments through which the demons work are hypocrites who speak lies, who have their conscience seared, "branded in their own

conscience as with a hot iron." So you've got demonic powers, you've got hypocritical deceived people who are the instrument of these demonic thoughts and demonic doctrines, and what are the specific doctrines? Look at verse 3, "forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified through the word of God and prayer."

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

Now this has great implications for all of us here. I want to speak a word to you dear young people. Many of you know and we have said it I hope not in a way that in any way engenders pride or smugness. Many of us have been around a lot longer and are very thankful for what we see God doing in many of your lives, your apparent hunger for the word, your seriousness about spiritual realities, and many of you have come to that place my wife and I have used our own little euphemism, we say they've sprouted. When the young girls develop and the guys begin to get a little fuzz on their cheek and on their chin, we say, "Well, they've sprouted." And with that sprouting you become conscious of desires and interests and temptations that you've never faced before. You've gone as we have humorously said from the stage where the opposite sex is yuck or yum, you've come to the yummy stage. You go from yuck to yum to hm, and many of you have come into the hm stage and you're conscious of these desires and inclinations and interests and a whole spectrum of things rooted in what you are as a male or as a female. You are merging into your mature masculinity and femininity. Adam and Eve were made, already pre-made mature male and female with fully developed sexual capacity, appetite and readiness for the sexual union within the sacred sanctuary of marriage. Man shall leave father and mother, cleave to his wife as a whole person and they two, and only such two, shall be one flesh.

But you're not there but neither are you back in the yuck stage. You're not there anymore. Some of you are still there but you're not going to stay there forever. Right now it seems utterly impossible that girls will ever be anything other than yuck, but I hope I live long enough to say, "Didn't I tell you?" You're going to move from the yuck to the hm and from the hm to the yum stage sooner or later, unless something is short-circuited in the development into your mature manhood and womanhood will be the emerging awareness of your sexuality with its desires and capacity for sexual pleasure. Don't think you're somehow degenerating into a demon when you're conscious of that, you're simply

becoming the man or the woman God intended you to be. That's what I want to say to you kids. Nobody talked to me that way when I was where many of you are and struggling through to think of myself biblically was no easy thing. Yes, there will be peculiar temptations. We're not coming to that, we want to start with this fundamental principle that that capacity, the desire itself is not of the devil but is an indication of God's creative wisdom and God's creative power and love.

I want to speak to some of you with a sordid sexual past. In pastoral counseling I found more than once how difficult it is when a man or a woman is had had a sordid, sinful, sexual past, how difficult to believe that that which was so much connected with the cesspool can be a spring and a pool of clear God-reflecting beauty. It's hard for you to come to that but you must. You must not allow the devil's triumphs in your past to cripple you in the present and to think about your identity as a sexual being as something inherently and hopelessly stained and unclean, and you can't wait until you die and go to heaven and become a floating spirit. Well, you're not going to be a floating spirit forever, you're going to have a resurrected body, and I don't understand all the implications but there's no indication that we become some kind of neutered, amorphous, non-sexual being though there is no marriage or giving in marriage, it will be males and females for all eternity for as male and female in heaven with glorified bodies, we'll reflect the image of our great and glorious God.

You see how basic this is, and then I want to immunize you against the horrible brainwashing job. You hear about, "We've got to get rid of this puritanic morality." Nobody's read the Puritans who says that. Now, Leslie, you're not going to be able to follow me on this. I'm going to quote a few lines from the poet laureate of the Puritans, John Milton. Do you want to hear how prudish Puritans were? Listen to Milton. In "Paradise Lost," he's describing God bringing Eve to Adam and the two of them walking off into the sunset hand-in-hand.

"Handed they went; and, eased the putting off
These troublesome disguises which we wear."

Do you see what they were saying? They were both naked and not ashamed. They didn't have to put off what he calls troublesome disguises which we wear.

"Straight side by side were laid; nor turned, I ween,
Adam from his fair spouse, nor Eve the rites
Mysterious of connubial love refused."

There was delightful willing commitment to the covenant of marriage and to the expression of that covenant in sexual intimacy.

"Whatever hypocrites austerely talk
Of purity, and place, and innocence,
Defaming as impure what God declares
Pure, and commands to some, leaves free to all.

Our Maker bids encrease; who bids abstain
But our Destroyer,

Capital "D," he's referring to the devil. Whoever would have caused marriage to be dirty.

"But our Destroyer, foe to God and Man?
Hail, wedded Love, mysterious law, true source
Of human offspring, sole propriety
In Paradise of all things common else!
By thee adulterous Lust was driven from men
Among the bestial herds to range; by thee
Founded in reason, loyal, just, and pure,
Relations dear, and all the charities
Of father, son, and brother, first were known.
Far be it, that I should write thee sin or blame,
Or think thee unbecoming holiest place,
Perpetual fountain of domestick sweets,
Whose bed is undefiled and chaste pronounced,
Present, or past, as saints and patriarchs used.
Here Love [within marriage, with sexual intimacy]
Here Love his golden shafts employs, here lights
His constant lamp, and waves his purple wings,
Reigns here and revels; not in the bought smile
Of harlots, loveless, joyless, unendeared,
Casual fruition; nor in court-amours,
Mixed dance, or wanton mask, or midnight ball,
Or serenade, which the starved lover sings
To his proud fair, best quitted with disdain.
[Love 'em and leave 'em. No new thing under the sun.]
These [Adam and Eve], lulled by nightingales, embracing slept,
And on their naked limbs the flowery roof
Showered roses, which the morn repaired."

Now isn't that horribly restrictive puritanic views of our sexuality? Nonsense. It's beautiful. Maybe you can't appreciate that. I get the goosebumps reading it. There's nothing in the air that is sinfully erotic, it simply paints in beautiful verse what the word of God says, "God beheld all that he made and it was good."

That's the first principle. The second principle and I hope to establish it more quickly, or I should say, proposition, second proposition is this: the God who designed and created us with our sexuality is the only one who has the right to determine and impose its legitimate functions. The God who designed and created us with our sexuality is the only one who has the right to determine and impose its legitimate functions.

Now most of you probably out in the glove compartment of your cars have what is called an owner's manual. It's really not the owner's manual, it's the manufacturers manual, isn't

it? They made the car. They put the various components together. They know how best every one of those components can operate, be serviced, be maintained so that you get optimum use of that thing which the manufacturer made with a specific end in view, that it would be a functional, safe means of transportation. Who knows better how to write the manual than the manufacturer? That's why the owner's manual comes from the manufacturer, comes with the car. You say, "Okay, pastor, obvious. Do you think I'm stupid? Sure, I understand that." Well, suppose, now just suppose, we've got to use our imagination, just suppose you should go out in the parking lot tonight and there you see a vehicle over on its side and suddenly this vehicle has a mind and it can talk, and the wheels are spinning away. Let's get it fully on its back so we can really carry out the illustration. And the wheels are spinning and the horn is blowing, and you say, "Car, what in the world are you doing?" He said, "Oo, I just found out I can make noise. I just love making noise. Listen to me, hooonk, hooonk, hooonk." Then you say, "Crazy old car." "Well, listen I can do something else. Watch me spin my wheels." [spinning noise] Goes up to 100 miles an hour. Kid, you say no car would be stupid enough to do that if it could think and speak. Do you see where I'm going with the illustration? The thing was never turned off the production line to function that way. Does it have the capacity to be on its back making noise? Yes. I've seen cars that have run into a telephone pole and the horn got jammed and all it was was a bent-up noisemaker. But it wasn't made for that and how do we know it? Well, among other ways we know it because the manufacturer who made it with a specific end in view has given us an owner's manual that tells us how to have the thing function to the optimum end for which it was created. That's a silly illustration but I find that people are most helped by the silly illustrations when all the more profound things get washed away with time.

Do you see the application? Who's the manufacturer of you and me? In the beginning God created and God said, "Let us make man in our image and after our likeness." He's the manufacturer and the product he made has sexual capacities and sexual functions and sexual desires, but it was never made to have a mind of its own to toot its horn and spin its wheels. The God who made us is the God who has the exclusive right to determine and to impose upon us the legitimate functions of that which he has made.

Notice how he did that with the appetite for food and then we'll move on. There in Genesis, we're back in creation again, in Genesis 2 God has made the man not only with sexual appetite and capacity for enjoyment in sexual function, but he's made him with a stomach, with a digestive system, the salivary glands with those nerves that go to that part in the brain that says you're hungry and you satisfy hunger with food, and God has declared that he's given him all that is there in the garden but he has put a restriction. Look at it in Genesis 2:16, "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shalt not eat of it: for in the day that you eat thereof you shalt surely die." Now here God makes a creature with an appetite, he makes him with eyes that can see food and appreciate what the food will taste like and what it will do to assuage hunger, but the creature made with hunger was not left free to gratify his hunger any old way he chose. He had to gratify his appetite for food according to the directions of the God who made him with an appetite. You see that from the text.

It wasn't enough for Adam to say, "Well, God, why in the world did you make me with an appetite and...?" God said, "That's out of bounds." He has a right to do it and without going into the whole matter of the significance of this, the basic issue is clear from the text. God said, "Of all the trees you may freely eat, you have an urge to pick that piece of fruit because somehow you think it will taste this way, experiment with it, Adam, that's your privilege. Of all the trees you may freely eat but of that one, under no circumstances are you to eat of it." And you remember in the temptation when the devil in the form of a serpent speaks to Eve, one of the snares was she saw. She saw. There was something. Verse 6 of chapter 3, "when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes." You see, those things which can cause us to salivate and cause us to think we desire a certain food, they all kicked in and they were directed to the tree, but over that tree stood the X of God, "Don't touch it. Don't eat of it lest you die."

Well, in the same way, without the same explicitness in this passage, when God makes the man and the woman with the capacity and the desire for sexual enjoyment and fulfillment, he mandates to them, verse 27 of chapter 1, "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply. When you engage in sexual intimacy and there is conception and birth, you are pleasing me. You have my mandate to be fruitful and to multiply and to replenish the earth." The God who has designed and created us with our sexuality is the only one who has the right to determine and impose its legitimate functions so that when our Lord centuries later in Matthew 19 is questioned about the issue of the permanence of marriage, this whole thorny question of divorce, what does he do? Matthew 19:3, "there came unto him Pharisees, trying him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife," very clearly that sexual fulfillment is to be heterosexual by the design of God, man, woman, man shall leave father and mother, cleave to his wife, and only within that cleaving, that total covenantal commitment of one man to one woman is there to be sexual intimacy, "and the two shall become one flesh." What two? Who decide they like each other and want to spend the night together? Or agree to live together for a period? No. The two who have made this leaving and cleaving and this irreparable covenant of commitment. It's unrevocable, that's the word I want. Irrevocable, unrevocable.

The Lord is saying right from the beginning that was the divine intention. You say, "Well, who is God to tell us what to do?" He's our Creator. The whole idea was his and he had noble ends to secure glory to himself and he says, "Within this framework my glory will be seen and revealed in those creatures that I have made with sexual capacities and functions and desires, and they are to be fulfilled according to the mandate of my own word and nothing else." So when God is about to articulate from Sinai that summary of all moral duty, the seventh commandment, "You shall not commit adultery." On into Matthew 5 when Jesus takes to task those religious externalists who thought that if they were never caught in bed with a woman other than their wife, they had kept the seventh

commandment. He says, "You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery: but I say unto you, whoso looks to lust, whoso looks with a view to desiring and in his mind conceives of having sexual fulfillment with anyone other than his wife, he has committed adultery already in his heart."

Now dear men, the Lord is not saying whoso turns his head inadvertently and sees a woman who is attractive and who may not be dressed modestly and is tempted to look where he shouldn't look and to allow the look to give birth to thoughts, who at that moment turns away, he's not violating the words of our Lord. He said whoso looks with an intent to lust and I've seen poor, overly sensitive men feeling, "I'm breaking the seventh commandment because I'm turning my head away all day." No, you're turning your head away because you've determined not to break it. Bless God for that. And if there's ever a marginal thing, then say, "Lord, I'm not sure if that second look involved lusting but if it did, cleanse me in the blood of your Son and help me next time not to look the second time."

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

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

overture to violate the law of his God and he comes through as gold tried in the crucible of testing, maligned and slandered but eventually wonderfully vindicated.

Now as I try to ask and answer the question why is that first principle critical, why is this second principle so critical? Well, again, for a number of reasons but let me state this: because of the prevailing climate of our Western culture that now assumes that right or wrong in fulfilling sexual desires can be determined by consensus, everyone refers to the '60s as the period of the sexual revolution, revolution against what? Most people assume it's a revolution against puritanic prudishness, puritanic infantile mentality about sex, we've now through the sexual revolution come of age. And what did God give our nation as his thank you for that revolution? The plague of AIDS, illegitimacy at levels it has not been in the history of our nation. But that pressure is upon us. Add to that the aggressive frighteningly militant so-called gay rights movements who are determined that every one of you sitting here and this man standing here will not merely say that I will give to an outspoken committed homosexual male or female not only the right to conduct himself with the freedom secured by our Constitution but I must give to him the approbation that his lifestyle is as pleasing to God as mine. That is their agenda. Don't be deceived. Nothing less than that will satisfy them.

It is not mere toleration, it is approbation at every level. That's why one of our dear members here had the heartbreaking experience of getting a letter from a young man who shamelessly says, "Now that I've declared what I am as a homosexual, I love Jesus more than I've ever loved him, he is more precious than he's ever been. And if you want to be my friend, I welcome your friendship on one condition, you don't use your friendship to try to do anything to dissuade me that what I now believe and experience is well-pleasing to God." I've seen the letter with my own eyeballs. He has simply absorbed the agenda of the so-called gay rights movement.

That pressure is on us. More and more when you say in the sweetest terms possible as I can say tonight if there is sitting among us someone committed to a lesbian lifestyle in the fulfillment of sexual appetite, or a man committed to a homosexual lifestyle, in the name of Christ and for the sake of Christ I believe I'd be prepared to give my life to win you to Christ, but in telling you I want to win you to Christ, I want to win you to a Christ who will break the chains that bind you to your perversion and set you free to be Christ's man, Christ's woman with a body that will honor him so that in any of its sexual expressions, they will be an expression of submission to the law and will of the God who made you as a sexual being.

We live in a country that thinks if enough states will approve same-sex marriages they will be legitimized. "Who in the world are you, you un-American, proud, bigoted prude? Get with it!" Isaiah 8:20, "To the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The scripture says, "Do not be conformed to this age but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is the good, the acceptable and the perfect will of God." If you sit here as one whose heart has been ripped open, that in this area you have been a rebel against God, nothing in the Bible says sexual sins are unpardonable sins. As we shall see when we

come to 1 Corinthians 6, Paul describes every major category of sexual deviation and says those who continue in it shall not enter the kingdom of God, but he says, such were some of you but you have been washed, you have been sanctified, you have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. No matter how deeply ingrained have been your patterns of sexual sin, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin. Jesus said, "All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven the sons of men except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit." Sexual sins are not blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, nor are regressions into any specific acts of sexual sin, nor are they to be the thing that cripples the child of God. 1 John 1:9 applies to the child of God who falls in the area of sexual sin, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." From all unrighteousness.

So may God help us as by his grace we seek to wrestle together with this subject of the divine antidote to sexual impurity, to start with the right foundation. Proposition 1: our sexuality, including our desire and capacity for sexual pleasure, originates with God and not with the devil. And proposition 2: the God who designed and created us with our sexuality is the only one who has the right to determine and impose its legitimate functions. And thank God that God has revealed himself in grace and mercy in the person and work of Jesus Christ and in the gift of the Holy Spirit so that Paul can say those such were some of you, in the name of the Lord Jesus that is the revelation of the way of having a just pardon, having a righteousness imputed, and by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit we can be accepted before God and in the community of his people and by the grace of God be those who show in this area of our lives the wonderful power of redeeming grace.

What a wonderful thing it will be if the Lord tarries, to see you young people who now profess to some degree attachment to Christ, to be able to sit with one of your pastors in premarital counseling and to hear you say with a glow upon your face in the presence of a servant of God, John, Harry, Pete, whatever his name is, "By the grace of God, I've kept myself for you. You'll not get damaged goods on our wedding night." And have a young man look a young woman in the eye and say, "By the grace of God, God has kept me from being sucked into the vortex of this cesspool that's become a whirlpool." And I tell you, the whirlpool gets more and more powerful. When you hear as I've heard recently of a well-known preacher in another country shamelessly declaring he's gone to live with his homosexual lover, I tell you, folks, this is not whistling Dixie or crying, "Fire! Fire!" when there is no fire, and if we aren't straight here, it's doubtful we'll be able to make much progress in any other area of our Christian lives.

Let us pray and ask God to help us. Let's pray.

Our Father, we're so thankful that we have your word as a lamp to our feet and a light to our pathway, and while we grieve in our hearts, mourn as we think of the moral cesspool that our society has become, we do not stand here in your presence like the Pharisees saying, "I thank you we're not like other men," but we say from our hearts but for your grace we would be in the thick of the mess. Thank you for your transforming and keeping

power and how we pray that you will lay up these principles in the hearts of the young men and women, the boys and girls, the adults in this assembly, for those, our Father, whose rebellion against you is heightened as they consider this aspect of their lives, we pray that you would use that conviction to bring them broken and penitent to the feet of our Lord Jesus. We would be bold to ask you, our Father, that we may by your grace be kept from every form of sexual uncleanness and impurity by the power of your grace and the strength that is in our Lord Jesus. Seal, then, your word to our hearts and help us, we plead, in Jesus' name. Amen.