

Pastor Tom Mortenson

Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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Ecclesiastes Revisited - Sex

Ecclesiastes 2:1-8

Well, we have been looking at God's wisdom in Solomon and as you know Solomon was wealthier, he was wiser, more powerful than any other man of his day and as such he was uniquely qualified to view life from a perspective that few people have ever had. His wealth and his power gave him the ability to make all of his fantasies a reality, and his wisdom gave him the ability to put that reality into perspective.

So Solomon's first task in the book of Ecclesiastes was to examine pleasure. And to do that he embraced five different elements of pleasure all with his eyes wide open. This is how he describes his task in *Ecclesiastes 2*. He says this, he says: *I said in my heart, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure; enjoy yourself." But behold, this also was vanity. I said of laughter, "It is mad," and of pleasure, "What use is it?" I searched with my heart how to cheer my body with wine -- my heart still guiding me with wisdom -- and how to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was good for the children of man to do under heaven during the few days of their*

life. In verse 8 he says: *I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well—the delights of the heart of man.*

Well Solomon lists five different areas of pleasure that he's examining analytically. He has laughter, he has wine, he has folly, he has amusement and sexuality. And so far we've looked at four of those five elements and we've seen that laughter in his view is really not the genuine healthy laughter of a good joke or something like that, instead it's cynicism. We've seen that wine and folly are the distractions from real living that they actually are. We've seen that amusement steals our communication, our conviction and our commitment to God as well. And so this morning we're going to look at this fifth pleasure that Solomon examines and that is sexuality.

Solomon says: *I acquired men and women singers, and a harem as well.* Well, the harem that Solomon is speaking of is what ultimately destroyed his kingdom. You've got to remember, Solomon is writing as an old man who's looking back at his life, and he's looking back with lots of regret to the foolish things that he did in spite of the wisdom that he'd been given. And an illicit sexual appetite is what proved to be Solomon's undoing.

This is how 1 Kings describes it. It says this, it says: Now King Solomon loved many foreign women, along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the people of Israel, "You shall not enter into marriage with them, neither shall they with you, for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods." Solomon clung to these in love. He had 700 wives, princesses, and 300 concubines. And his wives turned away his heart. For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. So Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and did not wholly follow the LORD, as David his father had done. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem. And so he did for all his foreign wives, who made offerings and sacrificed to their gods. And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the LORD commanded. Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, "Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my

statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant.

Solomon had 700 wives of royal birth and 300 concubines. I mean you see, in Solomon's day, agreements and treaties, they were sealed by giving the king's daughter in marriage. And so every time Solomon secured an ally he gained another -- quote -- "king's daughter" in marriage; hence he had 700 wives by royal birth. And that was bad enough because God had clearly forbade it. I mean, speaking of kings, God says in *Deuteronomy 17*: *And he shall not acquire many wives for himself, lest his heart turn away, nor shall he acquire for himself excessive silver and gold.* Well, Solomon did both. He acquired excessive silver and gold and wives. Now that was politically disobedient. The concubines though, they weren't about politics, they were about sex. And it's there where Solomon's life fell apart. Sex became a driving force that led him into places that he could never have imagined. As verse 4 says: *For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.*

And if you doubt sexuality has the power to enslave, just consider what it did to Solomon. I mean it took the wisest man who ever was, a man who sought to honor God by leading Israel through a time

of peace and prosperity while he built God's own temple, it turned him into a pagan animal, someone willing to offer worship to demonic monsters who demanded the human sacrifice of babies roasted alive. Solomon's wives so changed his heart that he -- quote -- *"Built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Molech the abomination of the Ammonites, on the mountain east of Jerusalem."* And we learn about what that's all about in Jeremiah who describes this worship. It says: *They built the high places of Baal in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, to offer up their sons and daughters to Molech, though I did not command them, nor did it enter into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.*

So how could you go from seeking to worship God and rule with great wisdom to offering live babies as human sacrifice? Well, we have a term for that today, we use the term "sexual addiction." God was a lot more blunt. In verse 4 he just said: *For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods.* And as we read these Old Testament accounts, again we have to remember the context. You see, in Ecclesiastes Solomon, he's reflecting back on a life of vanity, a life of emptiness. And by God's grace he's come back from the madness that has gripped him but it's left him permanently scarred. He's already told us how empty laughter and wine and folly and amusement were and now he's telling us what

seems like many a young man's fantasy, that it just doesn't deliver what it presents itself as. I mean how many people can honestly say what Solomon was able to say? He said, "*I denied myself nothing my eyes desired.*" And Solomon was one of the few people who actually realized that fantasy and it failed him miserably. He said: *All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing.*

And so this morning I want to look at the empty promise of illicit sex, whether it's premarital, extra-marital or something Solomon never could have imagined and that's Internet porn. In Solomon's case, you know, we can't even discuss pre- or extra-marital sex because Solomon's marital situation was such a train wreck that we really have no point of reference. We can't even accuse Solomon of extra-marital affairs because every woman he wanted, he just married and yet he tells us the experience was as meaningless as chasing after the wind. I mean Solomon for all of his wisdom could not see the wisdom of God's boundaries around sex, and yet he knew all about them. They'd been established long, long ago in the Garden of Eden before the fall. *Genesis 2 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 were both naked and were not ashamed.*

There it is, there should be one husband and one wife equaling one flesh; that's what it was supposed to be. Well Solomon missed that mark by a factor of a thousand. He was part of a long line of Old Testament patriarchs who missed the mark when it came to marrying but one woman. But that raises the obvious question then, why does the Old Testament seem to condone multiple wives? I mean after all, Abraham had two, he had Sarah and Hagar; and Jacob had two, he had Rachel and Leah. David had many wives; Solomon had many more. So what's up with that? Well, first you have to understand there's is a profound difference between condoning something and supporting it. The United States government condones the sale and use of tobacco and yet one can hardly say based on the commercials and the warnings and the regulations against it that they support it. They simply recognize that making tobacco illegal would only make a bad situation worse. And God sometimes for mercy's sake allows something that he truly hates in order to accomplish a greater good. I mean God hated having to watch us murder his Son, but he allowed the cross knowing that it was our only hope.

In *Malachi 2:16* God says: "*I hate divorce.*" However, in the New Testament, in *Matthew 19* Jesus says: "*Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.*" God hates divorce, but he permitted the hard-hearted Israelites to divorce their wives because the

alternative was far, far worse, it was to kill them. It was of God's mercy that he allowed it but it's not what God desired. God tolerated multiple marriages as a mercy to a culture which treated unmarried females worse than cattle. I mean to be unmarried in that society was to be adrift with no safety net whatsoever. To have no husband, to have no father was to have no protector and no provider and slavery and prostitution and servitude was often a woman's fate. And so God again for mercy's sake was willing to tolerate the protection that even multiple marriages provided. I mean he condoned it, he never supported it.

And you know in addition you could also argue that the Old Testament patriarchs are always portrayed honestly, warts and all. There's never an attempt to cover up their sins. You know, Moses committed murder, Abraham was a serial liar, Jacob was a deceiver, David was an adulterer. I mean they're all presented openly and honestly in scripture as broken vessels that God chooses to use. And Solomon and his wives was no exception.

And it's been pointed out that there's only two figures in the entire Old Testament whom God calls blameless and that was Noah and Job, and both of them were married to one wife. That's what God designed and that's what he blesses. But you know God also designed sexuality. And his design for that has been under a

withering attack for the last century, and the attack has been led by two men of their followers. One is Charles Darwin and the other is Hugh Hefner, and together they have managed to recreate sexuality in the very same mold that Solomon experienced, as uncommitted semi-autonomous coupling primarily intended for pleasure itself. I'll be the first one to tell you, this works great for dogs and cats and rabbits, because God has designed their pleasure seeking to result in more and varied dogs and cats and rabbits, but it works miserably for people because God never designed us that way.

Darwin's theory of evolution has convinced millions that a dog, a cat, a rabbit, a person are all just bags of chemicals basically assembled by time and chance answerable to no one. And according to Darwin's theory, the only value that truly matters is survival and that goes to the fittest as defined by your species out-reproducing your competitors. According to Darwinian logic, the more females I impregnate, the greater my fitness. It's been my genes that go forward, my gene pool survival increases. Again, great for animals but for people, not so great.

Awhile back I saw Dennis Rodman's Hall of Fame induction speech. And Rodman, if you don't know, he's a professional basketball player, he's famous for a very flamboyant and deeply, deeply

troubled life-style. And he used the occasion of his induction to the Hall of Fame to give a brutally honest speech where he talked about his absentee father. And he talked about him as the source of his pain as an adult. And he mentioned that his father had fathered 46 other siblings in addition to himself and that his father never bothered to even say hello. Now think about it.

Mr. Rodman Sr. has done a spectacular job of making himself more fit than most, according to the logic of evolution. I mean think about it. His genes now reside in 47 children. His species is prospering, his species is advancing; his children not so much. Like I said, it works well for dogs, cats and rabbits. Well, why not for people? Why not ask Dennis Rodman or his 46 siblings.

You see, Darwin's view of how sexuality works is perfectly appropriate if you're an animal. If, however, you are a totally unique creature created by God to bear his image, you are far more than that. And sexuality developed within the context of a loving family is what God has designed for us. But understand, it's a model that our culture is trying to deconstruct by trying to redefine the rules. And if you're trying to take your cues about sexuality from our culture, well you're kind of stuck right in the middle. I mean we are a culture that has rejected God's view but it still can't bring itself to fully embrace Darwin's, and so we kind of muddle about somewhere in the middle. I mean, we're not

prudes, we're not libertines, we know unbridled, unfettered sexuality is absolutely a recipe for disaster but we can't quite bring ourselves to impose any real restrictions on what we now accept as an inalienable right to pleasure. And the link that is missing is the link that makes sensuality and sexuality make sense is God. See, absent a transcendent authority, that is a God who rules, what possible reason can the world give for not engaging in premarital or extra-marital sex? You might get a disease. We've got precautions, we've got drugs. You might get pregnant. Well that's supposed to be a Darwinian blessing, but even so we've got pills, we've got devices, we've got abortion, which if you're nothing but a randomly produced bag of chemicals, that's no big deal.

You see, if you are a committed evolutionist and your son and daughter says, "Tell me why I shouldn't have sex," what do you say? And if you say it's wrong, how do you say why? You see, in years past society and culture did the heavy lifting when it came to those kind of moral issues and you can simply say, "Because it's wrong" and it was basically understood, but today our culture absolutely refuses to say that because we don't believe it because the religion of Darwinian evolution renders chastity meaningless. Animals don't practice chastity. I'm an animal. Why should I? I mean, that's the logic, isn't it? I mean couple that logic with

the only moral imperative that our culture still supports and that is "thou shalt have no moral imperatives," and you have a recipe for disaster. If there's any rule that cuts across all segments of society today, it's that no one has the right to tell anyone that anything having to do with sexuality is wrong. And the best that you could hope for is not the word "wrong," rather it's the word "risky." Sexual promiscuity is no longer ever identified as such. It's now called "risky behavior." Well, what if you eliminate the risk, I mean, is it then still wrong? You see, when all the rules of sexuality come down to biological risk you've already lost the battle because the enemy's just going to invent ways to degrade us sexually without any biological risk.

Case in point. This is according to *Fox News*: "It isn't grades, sports teams or bullying that have parents worried this back-to-school season. According to a recent survey, parents' top concerns for their children this school year is sexting, the practice of sending racy and inappropriate text and picture messages via cell phone." No biological risk at all.

"Nearly half of the parents polled (49%) listed their top concern as sexting, followed by text messaging at 33%. In addition, 49% of respondents said their child had received an inappropriate text message or picture, and 21% reported their child has received a

sext."

You see, if you don't believe in a transcendent authority, if you don't believe in someone or something bigger than yourself who actually defines for you what is right and wrong, when risk no longer defines behavioral boundaries, I can tell you the argument for chastity dies right then and there and there is no cogent reason for not having sex. But if you do believe that we're answerable to a God who is bigger than we are, I can tell you -- God forbid I should say it -- it's wrong because God, a transcendent authority, forbids it. *1 Corinthians 6 says: Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.*

See, God isn't saying here, gee, watch out, this is risky behavior. I mean he's calling it what it is. And forgive me for saying so, he says it's sin and he forbids it. And for a huge segment of society living sexual lives just like Solomon did such a command seems ludicrous. Folks say, it's my body. And I say, says who? I mean, how did you get here? And what did you have to do with it?

I mean, did you choose how long you're planning to live and where you're going to exit this moral plane? I mean you and I control virtually none of those answers and yet somehow we all claim authorship and sovereignty over our lives. We have nothing to say about who we are, where we are, how we got here and yet we have plenty to say about our rights once we find ourselves conscious of who we are. God says he owns our bodies because he made us and that gives him certain rights that we don't think he's entitled to.

What if he forbids fornication? I know that's a bad word, we don't say that, not because he's a cosmic killjoy but because he knows more about us than we think we know? He knows that sexual sins are like radioactivity, that you can be exposed of them over and over again and think your experience has no negative consequences, you can ignore the warnings and come away from them thinking they were all a big bluff. That's because the damage doesn't show itself like a cut or a burn or an abrasion. See, it's a damage that buries itself sometimes for years. As Pastor Tim Keller said: Sin is a force that always has consequences. As he puts it: "When you 'do' sin, sin always 'does' you. We just don't believe it when it comes to sexual sins. And when it comes to issues such as premarital sex, our culture has so thoroughly abandoned the romantic notion that it's just plain wrong it. That just doesn't work for us any more. And what is just plain wrong today is saying

something or anything is just plain wrong. You know, that's judgmental and it's the only sin our culture still views with horror.

Many, many years ago Francis Schaeffer pointed out how it is that societies had these kinds of moral bearings and how they lose them. He pointed out that at one time folks knew their God because they knew their Bible. And over time less and less people began to know scripture. And as they ceased to know scripture they ceased to know the whys and the wherefores of how God operates. But they still cling to their understandings that were passed on to them by their parents. They had what Schaeffer calls a romantic notion of right and wrong. They know something's wrong because they've been taught that it's wrong, they just really don't know why. When that generation meets a younger generation that demands to know more, that wants to know why it's just plain wrong, well that generation is oftentimes at a loss for words. That's where this generation is today. They have been failed by our generation because they don't even know why out-of-bounds sex is wrong. The result is our entire culture is on the same sexual binge that Solomon was on.

So why is premarital sex wrong? Well, the number one answer is because God, who is a transcendent authority bigger than we are, says so. But we also know some of the practical reasons as well.

I mean we can still frame the issue in terms of the damage that we know it does. For example, dating and courtship is a time to get to know a potential life partner and that's no simple task. We are complex creatures. We have a need to know and be known in body, soul and spirit. And of those three, despite what sex ed teaches, the body is by far the easiest people to learn. I mean, birds do it and bees do it and so do dogs and cats. They don't require instruction manuals. Somehow they manage.

For centuries the lessons learned in knowing the body began on a wedding night. And the time before that, the time spent in courtship was supposed to be time spent getting to know and be known not in body but in soul and spirit. Courting and finding out who your partner is as a person and who you are as a child of God relating to that person. Now if you leapfrog over learning to know your partner soul and spirit because your time is spent getting to know your partners' bodies, you'll find out, oftentimes after the honeymoon is over you may have married a complete stranger, because the physical, that is the body, easily overwhelms the soul and the spirit. And when the physical defines the parameters of a premarital relationship, much of the growth and insight you get into your partner's soul and spirit ends as well. It just gets overwhelmed by the physical.

Think of Solomon. I mean he had literally 1,000 sexual partners that he engaged in "risky behavior" with. I mean, how's that for a silly word? The women that he bedded, they were the same complex creatures of body, soul and spirit that all human beings are, but they were all reduced by Solomon to one-dimensional pieces of meat whose sole purpose was to satisfy him sexually. And you know, I'll be the first one to say that that works fine if you're breeding dogs and cats and rabbits because they don't function in body and soul and spirit. They don't need to, they're animals. But we are not animals and we're called to a different standard by a God that evolution seeks to eliminate.

Again, absent God and his authority many people have chosen to live according to Darwin's worldview. And they've cast off those puritanical restraints and gleefully embraced what I call radioactivity. They proudly proclaim that the Bible and God are only bluffing, and they have a champion. Their champion for the last fifty years now is a man named Hugh Hefner, died a few years back. His playboy philosophy championed recreational sex as something unique and different, a revolutionary approach to human sexuality. I don't think he ever read Ecclesiastes. I mean at least he would have known what Solomon said over and over again in that book. He said: *All things are full of weariness; a man cannot utter it; the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear*

filled with hearing. What has been is what will be, and what has been done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there a thing of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already in the ages before us.

See, Solomon embraced the playboy philosophy thousands of years before Hugh Hefner even thought of it. And it was Solomon who said it is wearisome, it is empty, it is meaningless. But he also said something else in that text and that is the key to Hugh Hefner's empire and the monster that he unleashed. Solomon said, *the eye never has enough of seeing*. Those words made Hugh Hefner a wealthy man. He made pornography palatable and popular as the Internet that now makes it ubiquitous. I mean it's literally everywhere.

I mentioned this before, just trying to get statistics for a message like this is a dangerous task because if you Google "Internet porn," you have to walk through a swamp just to get any information. This is what *CNN* said. It said -- quote -- "Gone are the furtive visits to seedy theaters and the fear of being outed as some perverted purchaser of porn. Now all you need to indulge anonymously in the triple X world is your trusty personal computer and a good connection to the Internet."

They go on to say: "It's an enormous business. There's lots of

money to be made, said Sean Kaldor, an analyst with Nielsen net ratings which estimated that 34 million visited porn sites in August, about one in four Internet users in the United States. The average user is 'looking at 121 pages, going back six times and spending an hour and seven minutes every month, looking at adult related material,' Kaldor said. All that browsing has caused the number of pornography web pages to soar during the past years with over 1.3 million sites serving up about 260 million pages of erotic content, according to a study released in September by the Seattle Washington-based Web filtering company n2h2."

That was in 2003. I mean today technology has done the same for pornography as it's done for all amusement. You know, last time I said the average person has more choices for amusement than Solomon with all of his wealth and power could ever have even imagined. And that same person can now have the virtual version of what Solomon had, uncommitted semi-autonomous pleasure-only relationships with one-dimensional fantasies of what Solomon actually experienced. Now for Solomon it was empty, it was meaningless. For millions today it's not only empty, it's costly, it's destructive and it's highly addictive. See, Solomon was right, the eye never does have enough of seeing especially when it comes to pornography. I mean like alcohol and other drugs, the amount of pornography needed to produce the high is always growing.

And so, too, the images have to grow progressively more and more degrading and debasing in order to get the same high. And when that happens, many folks are addicted.

Wired magazine reporting on a Senate subcommittee meeting said -- quote -- "Internet pornography is the new crack cocaine."

Understand this is not the church speaking, this is the secular world. I quote *Wired* magazine: "Mary Anne Layden, co director of the sexual trauma and psychopathology program at the University of Pennsylvania Center for cognitive therapy, called porn 'the most concerning thing to psychological health that I know of existing today.' Says, 'The Internet is a perfect drug delivery system because you are anonymous, aroused, and have role models for these behaviors,' Layden said. 'To have a drug pumped into your house 24/7, free, (and children know how to use it better than grown-ups know how to use it) -- it's a perfect delivery system. If we want to have a whole generation of young addicts who will never have the drug out of their mind. Pornography addicts had a more difficult time recovering from their addiction than cocaine addicts, since coke users can get the drug out of their system but pornographic images stay in the brain forever,' Laden said."

I mean you have to understand, this is the voice of the secular psychological community. This is not the church. And those who

avoid addiction still have the devastating effect that porn has on their marriages. Solomon had his pick of all the women in his kingdom. If he tired of one, there was always another. They were real, they were beautiful, but only a king could have them. Well, the Internet is far more egalitarian. Now anyone with a computer and a modem can have air brushed pixilated perfection with the click of a mouse. But human beings aren't air brushed, they're not pixilated, they're not perfect and real life and real marriage can't compete with virtual sexual perfection.

As feminist writer Naomi Wolf writes -- quote -- "How can a real woman possibly complete with a cyber vision of perfection. Downloadable and extinguishable at will. Who comes, so to speak, utterly submissive and tailored to the consumer's least specification?" Well the fact is she can't, and countless marriages are dissolving because of it. I mean the amazing thing is that even the non-Christian world is aware that Internet porn is a monster. Take it from me, Naomi Wolf is no friend to conservative Christians, but she sees it.

CNN also reported this: "The recent article in *New York* magazine contained interviews with men who said they were hooked on Internet porn. 'Dude, all of my friends are so obsessed with Internet porn that they can't sleep with their girlfriends unless they act like

porn stars,' a 26-year-old businessman told the article's author." That's freedom. That's sexual liberation.

You see, the enemy of our souls is an equal opportunity enslaver and Christian and non-Christian alike all are welcome to surrender their lives, their wills, their money and their marriages to the new altar and its virtual goddesses because Solomon's got nothing on us. Even worse, he had Chemosh and Molech that he offered live babies to. We have Darwin and Hefner, and make no mistake about it, we offer human sacrifices as well, we just do it at an abortion clinic rather than a temple. And Solomon's guilt and emptiness, it's ours for the taking.

So what do we do about it? How do we avoid the pitfalls that so many have fallen in; and if we have fallen, how do we get out? Well, we start with *Romans 13:12* which says this, it says: *The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires. There it is. Make no provision for the flesh. In other words don't make it easy to fall. I mean if you're young and you're dating, make no provision for your flesh.*

Enjoy getting to know your partner's spirit and soul in public places and avoid alone time in private places. It's not rocket science, it's common sense.

You know, when we counsel folks, we often speak about firewalls. A Firewall is just something you build to keep from catching fire. You know oftentimes folks say, "I got caught up in the heat of the moment. I didn't have the strength to resist." I say, "Okay. Let's find a place where you do have the strength and build the firewall there."

I mentioned before my own experience with pornography. I was in college in those days and in those days it was Penthouse and Playboy. The house that I lived in had subscriptions to both. When I got saved, I couldn't get those images out of my head. I would go to worship, I would go to pray, I would go to communion and there were those images. You think God conjured those images up? I prayed and I prayed and I sought God's grace and in time those images disappeared. And I learned then about firewalls. And I've mentioned this before but this was my habit, I said, if a store had Playboy or Penthouse or any kind of magazine like that in aisle 5, I wouldn't go to 4 through 6 just so I wouldn't get anywhere near that because I thought that's radioactive, I'm not going near it. That's what a firewall does.

I've met with lots of folks about issues like this, folks who are literally losing the battle to Internet porn. The first thing that I tell them is that sins like this flourish in the darkness, but they die when you bring them into the light. Talk to us. Bring it into the light, you will find sin's power diminishing. We will not condemn you because Christ doesn't condemn anyone who is willing to confess his sin. He says: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* And I've been at this a long time. I've been doing this for many, many years. I can guarantee you, you cannot shock me. Been there, done that.

And one very potent way to build a firewall, to make no provision for the flesh is through accountability. That's letting somebody else know of your struggle, someone you can be accountable to. I mean if Internet porn is capturing you, back up to where you still have strength and make a firewall there and it might mean getting rid of your computer. But you have to ask yourself is your freedom from slavery worth it? I mean, for others it may be as simple as moving the computer to a more public place, maybe enlisting the aid of an Internet filter, some type of accountability website such as CovenantEyes.com. For a small fee the service will hold you accountable to someone else by sending them monthly reports on what you're viewing. See, your accountability partner receives a

monthly breakdown of the sites you visited rated by their sexual content. And CovenantEyes.com has lots of testimonials of folks who say just knowing I was accountable gave me the strength to defeat it. It all comes under the heading of "*make no provision for the flesh.*"

And you know a number of years ago I was discussing this aspect with one of my sons. He protested, and he said, "You know, I get the feeling you don't trust me." And I looked at him and I said, "You're absolutely right. Of course I don't trust you." I said, "Guess what? When it comes to this stuff, I don't trust myself." I pointed out that when I counsel members of the opposite sex, I always try to make sure that someone else is present. If I make no provision for the flesh, why shouldn't my son?

So how about you this morning? I mean are you feeling what Solomon felt when he embraced the pleasures of illicit sex? I mean thanks to the technology of amusement what was a pitfall that only kings like Solomon could fall into is now virtually available to anyone with access to the Internet. I mean Solomon had it all and he said it was empty, it was meaningless, it was a chasing after the wind. He found that sexual pleasure like all other pleasures removed from God as the source of pleasure are like cotton candy. And you know what cotton candy's like? It looks like a solid brick. You grab a

piece and you put it in your mouth and it just dissolves and it evaporates right in front of you, which is exactly what the promise of pornography is like. And if you've been sucked in by that cotton candy, God still promises you away out.

God left heaven itself and he came to earth as a man just like us and then he lived the life that we were supposed to live, the difference being he lived it perfectly. And then he went to the cross to lay down that life as a perfect payment, his righteousness for our sin. Having done all of that, he's not about to leave us in this battle with no resources.

So if you feel helpless to fight because the monster is just too big and too strong, God says you are mistaken. And he says so in scripture. This is what he says in *1 Corinthians 10:13*. He says: *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 the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.* If God is speaking to you in that scripture, speak to me, speak to one of the elders. God promises you he will provide a way of escape. Just let us help you find it. Let's pray.

Father God, we praise you and thank you that there is an

alternative to the vision that Charles Darwin and Hugh Hefner have of what human sexuality is supposed to be. I thank you for who you are, I thank you for the gift of sexuality that you've given to us. I thank you for giving us boundaries, giving us the ability to understand what happens when those boundaries are trashed. I just pray that you would give each and every person sitting here today, anyone who is locked in that darkness, Lord, that you would give them the courage to seek out any one of us and just say, "I need help." Lord, speak to their hearts, give them grace, give them wisdom, give them power, give them courage, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.