

PROVIDENCE CHURCH

Glorifying God by knowing, living and proclaiming His truth in the world

Unleashing the Power of the Truth – Part V **Pastor Ty Blackburn** **Philippians 2:12-16** **February 15, 2015**

Please turn with me in your Bibles this morning to the second chapter of Philippians. It's going to be a point of departure for us as we look at an important topic this morning. I don't know if I promised last week, but I intended to be, maybe I did, intended to be back in John 15, and had begun studying it this week. This Wednesday, past Wednesday, I was teaching on, we are working through Proverbs, and so I taught on Proverbs 5, 6, and 7, and those three chapters are a goldmine of truth about purity, moral purity. All three chapters, all of Chapter 5, all of Chapter 7, and half of Chapter 6 are about the call of wisdom to moral purity. And I had worked through that in sharing the message, but I was still working on Thursday on my passage in John, and I happened to pull up an article/blog by Heath Lambert, that he put out on that day, about the movie 'Fifty Shades of Grey' that came out this weekend. It got me thinking about how the perversion of sexuality in America, and just the destructiveness of it. That issue was of course resonating with what the point of our series had been.

We've been doing for four weeks previously 'Unleashing the Power of the Truth' in our culture, and in our dark days. We talked about a number of issues. We've talked about abortion, what the Bible says about abortion, what the Bible says about homosexuality, what the Bible says about radical Islam, what the Bible says about racism. So we've been talking about the issues that are confronting us as the people of God, and which we need not despair over, but we need to lift up the truth against, and realize that is the answer to lift up the truth. And so it just resonated when I read the Lambert thing, and then Friday morning I read Al Mohler's blog on the same thing, and of course I've seen and heard so much about this movie coming out, this horrible perversion. I like what Heath Lambert said about it in his blog. He said:

There is a great deal of irony that such a movie will be released on a weekend when so many will be focused on the celebration of love. The irony is that the Bible is clear that sexual immorality is a demonstration of hatred rather than love.

And that is the truth. It is not love, it is hatred. When you engage in something like that, you are hating yourself, and you are hating the other person. Al Mohler talked about, in his blog on Friday, the same thing. He talked about how the level at

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which the culture is getting demonstrates how far the American culture has migrated from a biblical Christian worldview. That in the biblical Christian worldview, there is a unity of the good, the beautiful, and the true. You can't have beauty and deny goodness. That the Bible teaches the unification of those things, that God is beautiful, and good, and true, and all of His gifts are good, and beautiful, and true. They are meant to be used according to His design, and when they are, they are good, and beautiful, and true. So when you see the good or the beautiful taken and degraded by evil, that is not something to be applauded. He made this comment, he said:

A culture that is determined to reduce all sexual morality to the issue of adult consent is now ready to eat popcorn while watching the corruption of the gift of sex, and in effect, granting approval to a vision of sexuality that is perverse and abusive.

And what you really see is the power of sin, the deluding power of sin, that takes what God has given which is good and distorts and twists it until there is nothing left resembling what God gave. How it must grieve the heart of God. As I thought about these things, I felt like we needed to talk about this, one more sermon on this series, and we need to lift up the truth. I'm going to read Philippians 2:12-16. This really is a blueprint and a game plan for how you are to live in dark days. Don't get discouraged, we talked awhile back, Psalm 37, don't fret, do not fret, do not fret, do not fret. Don't get angry about what you see in the world so much. Don't stew on it, but be faithful. The apostle Paul says much the same thing here in Philippians 2:12-16.

Philippians 2:12-16~ So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. 14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; 15 so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

A beautiful picture. A crooked and perverse generation, darkness all around us, but what are we to do? Prove ourselves blameless and pure, not grumbling, not disputing, working out our salvation, and holding fast, or really could be translated

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holding forth the word of life in the midst of that darkness. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, we thank You for the preciousness of Your word. We pray that You might now, by Your Spirit, open our minds, open our hearts. By Your Spirit, illuminate Your word. And Lord, in the corners of darkness that exists in the hearts of the believers here, may You send forth Your light, and Your truth. And in the darkness of those who may this morning be with us who are still unbelievers, may You send forth the liberating light of the Gospel. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.

So I want to talk about unleashing the power of the truth, what does the Bible say about sexual fulfillment, the physical relationship between a man and a woman? What does the Lord say about that? And I want us to follow in our same outline. We've got two points that we've looked at each week—*Creating a Context for the Truth*, and then *Speaking the Truth*. That is essentially our game plan. *Create a Context for the Truth*, and then *Speak the Truth*.

1) Create a Context for the Truth:

You create a context for the truth, that is, when you want to talk with someone about this issue, someone who is struggling, someone who may just be engaging a conversation. They don't know they are struggling. They don't realize they are. They may not be asking for help. How do you engage them?

A) Pray:

Well the first thing we should do is pray, always pray, asking the Lord to help us. Asking the Lord to meet with us, and to meet with this person, and see every opportunity to talk to someone is an opportunity to engage in spiritual warfare, and we need the Lord's help. We need to be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might.

B) Put Off Pride, Put On Humility:

The second thing you do is we put off pride and put on humility. Remember that the people that we see around us, that may be on various levels of the descent described in Romans 1, various levels of degradation. When we look at that, it is something that grieves our hearts to see, the ugliness. The Scripture acknowledges this in 2 Peter, it talks about how righteous Lot was vexed in his soul as he saw the

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ungodliness around him. Here was a man that loved God, had a relationship with God, and yet he was surrounded in Sodom. Remember, he lived in Sodom, and so he was surrounded by this ungodliness, and his righteous soul was tormented, it says. So the Lord understands that it is hard to live in dark days, it is hard to live in times where the darkness is increasing, and He understands that we wrestle, but we must put off pride and put on humility. Remember that it doesn't help us to be prideful that we're not like they are. We need to put on humility. There but for the grace of God go we, and in reality, this is an area where it is important to heed the statement in 1 Corinthians 10, *...let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall*. Truly but for the grace of God go I, and so don't think you stand, don't be confident in your standing, cling to grace. When we remember that, it helps us to not talk down to people, to realize that we are, in reality, we're just, as Martin Luther said, "One beggar telling another beggar where he found bread." We are just holding forth the word of life on the same basic level as this other person. We are a sinner saved by grace. Put off pride and put on humility.

C) Put Off Self-Interest, Put on Love:

Thirdly, put off self-interest and put on love. Again, it is not about what the culture, the decline of the culture, we can feel disenfranchised, we can feel frustrated. "It didn't used to be this bad. It didn't used to be like this. I don't like it." The Lord is in charge of all of that. Our job is to do everything without complaining and arguing, but to trust Him, to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, and to hold forth the word of life. So put off self-interest and put on love. "Lord, give me love for this person. The love that You have for this lost person, or this person who is struggling."

D) Pursue Purity:

We also need to passionately pursue purity ourselves. We need to fight for holiness in this area. This is an area that is incredibly difficult to overcome when you establish patterns, but the Gospel has the answer, but we need to help each other, we need to fight. It is a fight. You know Paul uses that image a lot of different times, a race, the fight, but in 1 Corinthians 6, he says in 1 Timothy a couple times, "I fought the good fight." In 2 Timothy he says the same thing. But in 1 Corinthians 9 actually, not Chapter 6, in Chapter 9 he says, "I buffet my body." The word picture in 'buffet' is, "I hit in the face my body." "I buffet my body and make it my slave lest possibly," Paul writes this, "after I have preached to others, I myself might be disqualified." Do you see the humility in that? "I fight against the

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lust in my own flesh, and I fight like a boxer, duking it out for the sake of righteousness. I don't just worry about what is out there, I worry first about what is in here, and I fight for purity." That is what we are called to do.

And as we pray, and put on humility, and put on love, and pursue purity, then we are creating a context for the truth to go forth in a mighty way. If we wait until we have complete victory before we speak the truth, we would never speak if that were the case, not until we get to Heaven. No, we speak the truth for the glory of God, even while we know our own weakness, and acknowledge our weakness, but we must help each other. So *Creating a Context for the Truth*, that's the first point. Now, let's get to the second point, to *Speak the Truth*, the truth about this issue.

2) Speak the Truth:

To *Speak the Truth*, the second major point is where we are going to spend our time this morning, and I want to break down this second point, *Speak the Truth*, into three sub-points—*The Truth About Sex*, *The Truth About Sin*, and *The Truth about the Savior*. What does the Bible say about our sexuality? What does the Bible say about sexual fulfillment? This is one of the things that, you know Satan is operating a fulltime, 24-hour, 7 day a week, 365 and a ¼ days a year program of misinformation, and misleading of people. He is deceiving and deluding people every day, all day, all the time. And if we are careful, sometimes we don't speak enough about these things because we can get deceived into not speaking clearly about it. I don't think we need to talk about this an inordinate amount, but we need to talk about it the right amount, according to what the Scripture says, and we need to be able to speak the truth about our sexuality, and about sex itself. There are four things I want to share with you. I think that we can summarize the Bible's teaching about sex.

A) The Truth About Sex:

a) It is Created by God:

The first thing is that it is created by God. Now that seems like an obvious thing, but there are implications, and we almost tend to forget that. Genesis 1:26-27:

Genesis 1:27 ~ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

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Chapter 2, Genesis 2:18, goes back into the chapter, into the creation, the sixth day of creation, and spotlights it, and slows, it is like a slow-motion instant replay of what was described in Genesis 1. And you have a lot of information added on the second chapter of Genesis. One of the things you see is that when God looked at man, it wasn't good for man to be alone, so He made a helper suitable, and when He made this helper suitable, He made Adam fall into a deep sleep, He took a rib out of Adam's chest, formed it into a woman, breathed into that woman the breath of life, brought her to the man, and ordained marriage.

Genesis 2:22-23~

***23 The man said,
"This is now bone of my bones,
And flesh of my flesh;
She shall be called Woman,
Because she was taken out of Man."***

24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

It was God's idea, the one flesh relationship. He created it. It is created by God.

b) It is Given by God:

Secondly, it is given by God. It is a gift. It is a gift of God. We see there in Genesis 1 that it was a gift for, one of the reasons it was given to us was for procreation. We were commanded to be fruitful and multiply. Well you need the physical relationship between a man and woman to procreate, to beget children, to have sons and daughters.

But it was also a gift for oneness, ***For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.*** The Lord intends the physical relationship between a man and a woman to impart a oneness, not just physically, but a oneness of soul. We see the distance between man and the creation in a number of ways. We talked about this a little bit last time, the distance between man. We are in the image of God, nothing else is. There is a sense about man in which we commune, and relate in a way that is different than every other created being. I know some of the animals have their communication skills, and

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some of them are more advanced than others, but none are like man. We commune with God and we commune with each other in a unique way. We see this even in the way God made us to experience the physical relationship. Man experiences the physical relationship face-to-face, soul-to-soul. It is about oneness, but it is also about pleasure. It is a gift of God for procreation, for oneness, and also for pleasure.

Turn over to Proverbs 5:18-19. This is one of the passages we looked at on Wednesday. The author of Proverbs is writing essentially to his son, and saying, "Listen, you need wisdom so that you can avoid the pitfall of immorality." It is a pitfall, it always has been a pitfall. It's not so much worse today than it was then. It is different, the access points are more available, but it has always been there. He is telling his son how to overcome the temptation to sexual immorality, and one of the ways he tells him is that, "You need to enjoy the pleasure of the physical relationship the way God intended, man and wife." Look what he says in Verse 18:

Proverbs 5:18-19 ~

- 18** *Let your fountain be blessed,
And rejoice in the wife of your youth.*
- 19** *As a loving hind and a graceful doe,
Let her breasts satisfy you at all times;
Be exhilarated always with her love.*

One of the most powerful ways you can protect the purity of your own relationship is to work at it and to be exhilarated, to work at being exhilarated with your spouse. Husbands, work at being exhilarated with your wife. Wives, work at being exhilarated with your husband. It's interesting, the language, he says, "Be satisfied, let her breasts satisfy you at all times." The imagery of the word '*satisfy*' is '*to drink, to be satiated, to be filled, to be full and even drunk, or to eat and to be completely stuffed*'. So the idea is, as you have needs, you are to seek to fulfill those needs in the marriage relationship. Then, that's what the word '*satisfy*' means in Verse 19, but then he says right after that, ***Be exhilarated always with her love.*** This word '*be exhilarated*' means literally '*be intoxicated*'. This isn't just picturing a procreation, and just oneness, it is picturing pleasure, satisfaction. And so what we see is God is the one, God is the one who has created this. It is a gift of Him for our pleasure, and it leads us to the third point, it is a proof of the goodness of God.

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c) Proof of the Goodness of God:

Sex is created by God first, secondly, given by God, thirdly, proof of the goodness of God. It was His idea. Think about that. You know, I read something this week that we have, do you know how many taste buds we have? Ten thousand taste buds. The average adult has 10,000 taste buds. Isn't that amazing? You've got a tongue, 10,000 taste buds. Some of us have a little more, some of us have a little less, but on average, 10,000. What does that say about God? We taste four different types of tastes—saltiness, sweet, sour, and bitter, and all of the variety of foods that God has made for us, to be enjoyed by us. You see the Lord's lovingkindness is over all His works. Taste and see that the Lord is good. You eat delicious food, and you see, "Look at the goodness of God that God would make it this way."

We could be like an automobile. You know when I filled up my car the other day, my car didn't go, "Mmmmmmm. Ahhhhhhhh. That tastes so good!" No, it is just putting fuel, gas, we could be like that. "I've just got to fuel up," and you just eat, no taste, tasteless, you know, just eat away, and then, "Okay, I'm ready to go." No, God made it so that we would enjoy the pleasure of eating. It is His idea. He has made the incredible vast array of tastes for us that you get to experience when you go to different types of restaurants. You eat a certain kind of food you've never eaten before, and you think, "I've never had that taste in my mouth. Boy that is good!" Or you eat a different pastry, and different cultures are good at the different things, aren't they?

I mean, you know, when I was in England, I wasn't that impressed with the food. In fact, the best English food is Indian food, or American food, or Italian food, or wherever else they brought food in. I can say that my family is originally from England, the Blackburns, we come from England. I'm glad we got out when we got out. But you know, the French and their pastries, the Italians, now we have the blessing of Thai food, and Japanese food, Korean food, all around us, and you see the tastes that God has made. This is a reflection of the goodness of God, and when you understand that, now come back to the issue of sexuality. Who was it who made it like this? Why did God make this such a blessing for a man and a woman to enjoy together? Because He is so good.

I love what C.S. Lewis says about that in his book The Screwtape Letters. It makes this point powerfully clear. Now The Screwtape Letters, basically the premise of the book is that you have one demon writing to another demon, so it is kind of an

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interesting premise for a book. Lewis is basically speculating about the ways, and the deceiving strategies of our enemy, the enemy of our soul, Satan. And so Screwtape is writing to Wormwood, his nephew, okay? And he is telling Wormwood how he should go about, as a demon, how he should go about deceiving his patient, that is a human being that he is assigned to. And Wormwood has apparently written to Screwtape because we just have letters from Screwtape. We assume what Screwtape received from Wormwood. Screwtape writes to Wormwood, and apparently Wormwood has written to him saying, “Hey, I’m using the pleasures to deceive my patient.” Listen to what Screwtape says back. He says:

Never forget that when we are dealing with any pleasure, in its healthy, and normal, and satisfying form, we are in a sense on the enemy’s ground.

Now listen, this is a demon talking to another demon. Before this he said, “It’s a great strategy to use pleasure, but,” he’s giving a warning. “Remember that when you’re using pleasure to deceive, you are on the enemy’s ground.” Now, he’s talking about who? He’s talking about God.

...we are in a sense on the enemy’s ground. I know that we have won many a soul through pleasure. All the same, it is His invention, not ours. He made the pleasures. All our research so far has not enabled us to produce one. All we can do is to encourage the humans to take the pleasures which our enemy has produced, at times, or in ways, or in degrees which He has forbidden. Hence we always try to work away from the natural condition of any pleasure to that which is its least natural, least redolent of its maker, and least pleasurable.

And look what he says next:

An ever-increasing craving for an ever-diminishing pleasure is our formula. It is more certain in its better style to get the man’s soul, and giving nothing in return. That is what really gladdens our father’s heart.

Now when he says ‘our father’, he’s talking about Satan. To work from the natural to the unnatural, that is Satan’s strategy, and by doing that, what happens is the pleasure diminishes. But what I want us to see is, he is acknowledging right up front, “Hey, Satan didn’t invent anything good.” The pleasure that you get in your physical relationship is gotten directly from God, and only from God, and ought to be a source of great thanksgiving, and praise, and worship.

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So it is given by God, it reflects the goodness of God. *The Truth About Sex*, it is created by God, secondly, given by God, thirdly, another proof of the goodness of God, and fourthly, it is regulated by God.

d) It is Regulated by God:

It is to be enjoyed according to God's guidelines. Isn't it obvious? He made us, He knows how He made us, He knows what He made us for, He knows how we are to operate. The Bible is, in a sense, our owner's manual. It tells us that the way that you will enjoy this good gift of God is within these bounds, and clearly the bounds set forth in Scripture are that the sexual relationship is between one man and one woman who have a covenant relationship for life. Everything outside of that is sin. Everything! That it is reserved for that one holy relationship, and that is where it will be enjoyed. And every time you step outside of those bounds, you begin to be degraded, you begin to be diminished, and you begin to diminish even your pleasure. So the truth about sex is that it's a gift by God, created by God, regulated by God, and reflected in the goodness of God. Now, *The Truth about Sin*, the second sub-point under *Speaking the Truth*.

B) The Truth about Sin:

There are five things that I want to share about the truth about sin, and I want you to turn with me to Romans. We're going to look at Romans 3, and then we're going to look back at the passage we looked at a moment ago, Romans 1. It's important for us to remember and constantly apply our theology to the particular issue at hand. Now, what is it, why is it, that people are devolving? You see this evolution of the cultural view of sexuality is devolving. Why is that? Well, that's the nature of sin. Look what he says in Romans 3:10. This is God's indictment of what the condition of man is.

Romans 3:10 ~ as it is written,

“THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

11 THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,

THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

12 ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS;

THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD,

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- THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.”***
- 13** ***“THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE,
WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING,”
“THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS”;***
- 14** ***“WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS”;***
- 15** ***“THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,
16*** ***DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,
17*** ***AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN.”***
- 18** ***“THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.”***

It is the nature of man to turn astray. Just like we saw in Chapter 1 just a few verses before this, if you turn back over to Chapter 1 we read earlier, that what happens is man turns away from the worship of God. Though he knows God, he knows about God, it's evident in creation, it's evident in our own hearts, our conscience, when we turn away from God and we stop worshiping and praising God, and we worship the creature rather than the creator, we turn to idolatry, and then in our idolatry, God gives us over to our hearts that are running away from Him. Giving us over means He stops restraining us. The wrath of God being revealed in Romans 1:18-32, three times the phrase *He gave them over* is used. In Verse 24: ...*God gave them over to the lust of their hearts...* In Verse 26: ...*God gave them over to degrading passions;*... In Verse 28: ...*God gave them over to a depraved mind,*... Three different time this verb means to turn over, to release to someone else like a person would turn over a prisoner to the executioner. He gave them over. God gives them over to their passions. God gives them over to even more ungodly, degrading passions. God gives them over to a depraved mind.

So it's the nature of sin to run away from God and to run into error, and when you look at this, particularly that passage in Romans 1, we begin to see what sin does, and there are five things I want us to look at, and three of them are here in this passage.

First of all, sin consumes. The word *lust* in Verse 24 becomes *degrading passions* in Verse 26, becomes *burning with desire toward one another* in Verse 27, that if you feed lust, you get more lust so that a person gets an ever-increasing lust. It's like a fire. You throw wood on the fire and what happens? The fire gets hotter. Some people have been deceived by the enemy into thinking, “Well, I can allow the lusts of my flesh to rule in some sense in just a private way, not with anyone,” and will indulge their lust, and think, “Well, when I get married it will be different, because then I'll have an outlet for these passions.” You don't have an outlet for

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ungodly lusts, so if you feed the fire of ungodly lusts before you're married, you're going to take into your marriage ungodly lusts. What will happen is where they might have been directed toward your future spouse, now they're directed away or they're directed your spouse in indecent, inappropriate ways. What's the answer? Don't feed lust. How do you make a fire go out? You stop feeding it. It takes a while, but eventually it goes out. The picture is sin consumes.

The second thing it does is it degrades. You move from the natural to the unnatural. You see that in Romans 1:26.

Romans 1:26 ~ ...for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,...

Literally unnatural means against nature, in Verse 27:

Romans 1:27 ~ ...the men abandoned the natural function...

The idea of nature/natural here, denotes the way that we were made to operate, the natural condition, the regular order of nature. It's stamped on our character. The idea is that sin moves you away from what's stamped on your character, what's stamped on your soul. It moves you away from that, that the desires that you feel because of sin are actually desires to run away from God and to run away from what He has made. That shows us we can't trust our hearts. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it?" the Prophet Jeremiah writes in Jeremiah 17:9.

Proverbs 14:12 ~ There is a way which seems right to a man, but the way thereof is the way of death.

You can't trust your heart. And as you follow your lusts, what happens is you become less and less. God gave them over to degrading passions, that is, the idea of dishonorable. Degrading means to become less in value, less in worth, so that as people give themselves to lusts and passions, they become less valuable. I mean, not ultimately. Every person that's created in the image of God is valuable to God, and we're to see them as that, but it means in their own heart they are demeaning themselves. They're denying, in a sense, their birthright as a man or a woman, this movement from the natural. The natural here is what God has made. God says what's natural, not what we think, and it's not what we want. Our sin nature confuses what's natural, doesn't it? It feels natural to go that way. God says, "No,

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what's natural is to go this way.” Now, what are you going to do, what you feel like is natural or what God says is natural? That's the choice. So sin consumes, it degrades, and then:

Thirdly, it destroys. We see this descent down into a depraved mind in which they're continually just doing things which are not proper, Verse 29:

Romans 1:29 ~ being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips,...

Later on he says *inventors of evil*. This is the descent that happens when you give yourself to sin. It destroys, and ultimately it destroys in hell. Now, this is something very important for us to realize. We believe that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, that if you place your faith in Jesus Christ and what He's done for you on the cross, He washes you from all of your sins—past, present, and future. He paid for them. The sins of everyone who would ever believe, He paid the debt in full. But you have stern warnings about the danger of sin even for those who profess faith in Christ.

When Jesus is talking in Matthew 5 and He says, “If your right eye offends you, pluck it out and cast it from you. If your right hand offends, cut it off and throw it from you.” He says that in light of the temptation. Right before He said that, He says this: “If a man looks at a woman to lust after her, he has committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye offends you, pluck it out.” He's saying use radical measures to deal with sin, because He goes on to say, “It would be better to enter into Heaven without your eye than into hell having both eyes. It would be better to enter into Heaven without your hand than to have both hands and go into hell.” What He's saying is you may profess faith, but if you're not really fighting sin, you better watch out. You may find that you haven't dealt with it radically, and you may find out that your faith really hasn't been genuine. The true believer, though he may be overcome with sin, he may find himself in bondage, the Spirit of God in him will help him, and eventually he will come back into the path of righteousness. But it's saying to us if you make a profession of faith today, if you say, “I believe in Christ,” deal radically with sin, particularly sexual sin. Be willing to do whatever it takes, even amputation.

We're tempted to give ourselves to sin. What does an amputation look like? Sometimes it looks like going to another believer that you trust, that you love, and

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confessing your sin, and asking for prayer, and asking for help, humbling yourself, because sin not only consumes, and degrades, and destroys, but it destroys forever.

Fourthly, it also deceives. Turn with me back to Proverbs 5. Sin promises something that it never delivers. The idea is that you'll have more pleasure if you go the way of the world. If you'll go the way of the world, you'll have more pleasure, and the lie that we've been told is that God's holding out on us. Isn't that what the essence of the temptation to sin really was in the beginning? The serpent said to Eve, "Has God said that in the day you eat of it you'll surely die? You surely shall not die, but God knows that in the day that you eat of it, you'll be like Him." In other words, "God's holding out on you. God's restricting you from what you really need." And that's the essence of the nature of sin in us is we have this wiring now, this messed up wiring, like a tremendous computer virus that we can't get rid of, that makes us question God's goodness. So He says to us in a number of ways, "If you go the way of adultery, the way of immorality, you will find fulfillment. Look at Proverbs 5:3-4. How good the Lord is to give these images to us. These are passages we ought to meditate on, and meditate means see the pictures, think about the pictures, and feel the force of the pictures in these words. Look what he says:

Proverbs 5:3

***For the lips of an adulteress drip honey
And smoother than oil is her speech;***

I love the sense of reality the Scriptures bring. The lips of an adulteress drip honey, that sin looks like it's going to taste sweet. The lips of a woman can be very alluring, and here the writer of Proverbs acknowledges that. They seem that that's the place for fulfillment. "That's what I'm going to find satisfying to me." And the smoother than oil is her speech, the idea of smoother than oil, it's a little bit helpful for us to understand in that day they would take oil for a sore throat, or they would put oil on their bodies to heal a wound. So imagine drinking some oil down to soothe your throat, and you think it's going to soothe you. He's saying that the adulteress is going to be sweet to your taste and soothing to your body, but look at Verse 4:

Proverbs 5:4

***But in the end she is bitter as wormwood,
Sharp as a two-edged sword.***

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The picture is you taste and you think it's honey, but you just put in your mouth wormwood. You thought you were soothing your soul, meeting the need of your soul, that you were putting oil down your throat, but in reality you were putting a two-edged sword down your throat. Who wants to do that? God says that's what adultery is. Again and again, in Chapter 6 He says, "The man who goes into an adulteress becomes a loaf of bread, in Chapter 6 and Verses 25 and 26. Look at Proverbs 7:21-23. Here you see a man who's been seduced by a woman. Verse 21 of Chapter 7:

Proverbs 7:21-23

- 21** *With her many persuasions she entices him;
With her flattering lips she seduces him.*
- 22** *Suddenly he follows her
As an ox goes to the slaughter,
Or as one in fetters to the discipline of a fool,*
- 23** *Until an arrow pierces through his liver;
As a bird hastens to the snare,
So he does not know that it will cost him his life.*

It looks like life, it feels like life, but it delivers death. It promises fulfillment, but it gives you destruction. That's the reality of what sin does. It deceives.

Fifthly, it also diminishes. It diminishes in its satisfaction. What Lewis said in the book earlier, an ever-diminishing pleasure, an ever-increasing desire for an ever-diminishing pleasure, that is reality. The more that you give into lust, the more that you find it doesn't satisfy. This is why, and you see this in the sociological literature that people are writing today about people who become ensnared and enslaved—folks that become serial killers, what you find is a history of lust needing more and more depraved and more and more wicked expressions to find satisfaction. So the message is don't start down that path, and if you're on that path, come to Christ. Look to Christ, to be released and delivered. So the truth about sin is that it consumes, it degrades, it destroys, it deceives, it diminishes.

C) The Truth about the Savior:

The good news is that we serve a Savior that sets sinners free. John 8:31-36, we looked at this the first week we started this series. Jesus says in John 8:31...

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John 8:31 ~ ... “If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; 32 and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.”

“Continue in My word and you will be free. You’ll show that you’re a true disciple, and you will be free.” The Jews say to Him, “We’re Abraham’s descendents. We don’t need to be free. We’ve never been enslaved by anyone,” and Jesus says, “Everyone who sins is the slave of sin.” What He’s saying is you may be enslaved by sin, but if you come to Christ, you will be free. This is the good news. This is the word of life that we hold forth. We preach a Savior who not only saves from the consequences of sin, the penalty of sin, but He saves from the power of sin. He delivers. He sets the captive free. He proclaims the favorable year of the Lord, and this is the best news in the world.

The person who’s on these spirals, even though they are deluding their self to think they’re finding fulfillment, in their heart of hearts they know that they’re running away from God, and they know that they’re becoming more and more miserable in their hearts. That’s why they’re so angry. We proclaim a Savior that will save them, and that will love them, and that will transform them. In Colossians 1:13, the apostle Paul says, “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness, and translated us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,” that God delivers us from the domain. You may have the sinner who’s completely engrossed and encased in sin, so deluded, so darkened, and yet the power of the Gospel can transform him in a minute.

I remember one of the most interesting testimonies I ever heard was an interview that James Dobson did with Ted Bundy. Those of you who are older remember that name. Ted Bundy was a serial killer who killed dozens of women over a period of years. He was in prison for life, and during that time of imprisonment, he came to know Christ. He professed to come to saving faith in Jesus Christ, and before he died, he had an interview with James Dobson, and in that interview he talked about his faith in Christ, and the wonder of forgiveness, and he also warned against the danger of wedding sexuality and violence. This is what had done it to him, and he was pleading with Dobson to get the word out. This is the danger. Don’t wed sex with violence, which is exactly what that wicked movie does. But here’s a man who was enslaved, set free.

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Everybody who is saved is someone who was enslaved, set free. The apostle Paul was enslaved, and he was set free. The apostle Paul was so enslaved that he was persecuting Christians. He wanted to see them killed. Remember when he gets saved on the road to Damascus? He encounters Christ. He's not fully experienced salvation, but God's working in him. He's in Damascus. He has scales on his eyes, and God goes to a guy named Ananias, and says, "Ananias, you need to go talk to Saul," and Ananias says, "Lord, do You know what he's doing?" Isn't that amazing that he said that to the Lord? "Do You know what he's doing? He's persecuting us." "I've chosen him as My instrument. Go talk to him." Ananias goes and preaches the Gospel to him, the scales fall off, and Saul the persecutor becomes Paul the apostle. In 1 Corinthians 6, he talks about all the wickedness of sin. We looked at this a few weeks ago when we were talking about homosexuality. He talks about idolatry, and all kinds of immorality, and impurity, and homosexuality, and then he says, "For such were some of you, but you were washed. You were cleansed. You were sanctified. That's what you were, but you're no longer that."

That's the glory of the Gospel. We proclaim a Gospel that is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. It sets people free, and so we want to have opportunity to share it. No matter how dark it is, you have the light. It doesn't matter how dark it is if you have a light. It just makes the light shine brighter. So deliver the light. Share it.

Not only is He a Savior who sets sinners free, but He's a Savior who continues to set sinners free. He doesn't just save you from the penalty of sin. He saves you from the power of sin in an ongoing way. So if you're a Christian and you've given your heart to Christ, but you're struggling in this area, you need to look at Christ. You need to go to Him. You need to possibly do some amputation. You need to go to another believer and make yourself accountable, but you need to understand that Jesus Christ intends you to be free. Now, He doesn't do it all at once. He chooses to let us have to fight like Paul said, to buffet our body. We've got to get up every day and get in a fistfight with sin. John 8:36 says if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. He's not going to stop. He's going to keep on freeing you. Romans 6 talks about how we were the slaves of sin, and now we're slaves of righteousness. We've been set free. You can't go on sinning, and sinning, and sinning, and sinning, because you've been set free.

Now, don't we feel like we still have these desires in us? "Lord, where do these things come from? Lord, I want to be rid of these things." What do we do? We

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keep focusing on Jesus, and keep remembering His truth. Keep meditating on the fact that it's a lie, that it doesn't offer life. It offers death. It may offer life, but it delivers death. We remember what Jesus has done for us, that He really has set us free from the reign and rule of sin. It doesn't mean the presence of sin. We still have as Paul says in Romans 7, "In my flesh dwelleth no good thing. I find in me lusts that still want to do that which God does not want me to do." But though the presence of sin is there, the reign of sin is not. I am free.

I love what Martyn Lloyd-Jones says in his commentary on Romans 6. He uses this image in talking about how we feel like we're still in bondage sometimes as Christians, don't we? "I feel like I can't be free of this sin." He says to know what it means that you've been set free from the reign of sin, and that you're supposed to work at believing this and walking in this, and as you believe this and walk in it, you will experience the joy of it. Lloyd-Jones the English preacher, says, "Imagine a man who had spent all of his life in slavery." He was talking about American slavery, a Black man in America, he says.

He uses this image that he grew up his whole life and now he's 60 years old when the slaves are set free, and he continues to live in the town he used to live in, but now as a free man. Imagine that that man is standing on a street corner there in 1870 Alabama, and he's talking to friend and he hears behind him the voice of his former owner. Can you imagine that that man would feel for a moment the fear and anxiety well up inside of him? He hears that familiar voice that had so often been raised in abusive tones and in hurtful words and actions, and he feels a sense of terror come over him, and he's tempted to even feel like he's still a slave. But what is he to do? He's to know that he has received freedom. He has been emancipated. He is to remember the truth, not what he feels, but what is in fact the law of the land, and if you are in Christ, the law of the land is if the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed.

You are free, and you're to remember that though it feels like that former slave-master has authority over you, he does not. Jesus Christ owns you, and if you will look at Christ, meditate on His word, and fight the battle with the truth, "I know it feels like I want to go this way. I know it feels like it's life. I know it feels like it's going to be sweet. I know it feels like it's going to be soothing, but Christ is my Master. He is the one who is true. Every word that He said is right. I trust Him. I will walk toward Him. Lord help me. Lord help me each step of the way." That's the way that God wants us to live, and as we do that and we understand that life is found, in this area like every other area, in following the word of God, what

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happens is we will become more and more fulfilled. The Lord wants us to be a people who shine with brightness and holiness. And the reality is the most fulfilled people in the world—this is reality—the most fulfilled people in the world sexually are Godly Christians. Write it down, underline it, and highlight it. That is truth. It will always be true, because they are the people that are living according to the Owner’s Manual, and the surveys prove it.

Now, they try to change it around. I remember reading in the 1990’s a survey they did in the 1990’s that the most fulfilled people in that area were those who lived in a monogamous relationship, and the writers were like so surprised. That’s totally against their view of nature. I read it and said, “Exactly right.” They’re doing it God’s way, the truly natural way, and we find more and more fulfillment. God intends it to be done in that way, in a context of love and commitment, with a person that you live with and walk with through the difficulties of life, someone you raise children with. That’s how that is to be experienced. We speak the truth and we live the truth, and we shine with the glory of God.

Let’s pray together...

Father, we thank You for the glory of Your word and the glory of Your truth. We thank You for the amazing reality of what Jesus Christ has done for us. We pray for those that are here today that need to experience Your freedom. May You help them today to look upon Christ. If they have not truly repented and believed, let today be the day of their salvation. Lord, You beckon sinners to You. You’re always saying, “Come.” Help them today to come to You to receive Your forgiveness of sins through the blood that You shed.

For believers here today that might be struggling in this area, Lord, help us to turn to You more fully and in a more focused way, living on Your word, reckoning on the truthfulness of Your word. We’ve never found You in any area to have been false with us. Every word of Yours is true. None of Your words fall to the ground. Help us apply that in every area of our lives including this one, and may we be free for the glory of our Savior, and in the midst of these dark days shine the light of Your glory. We pray this in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

“Unleashing the Power of the Truth – Part V”

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