

Do not commit adultery

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[0 : 0 0] Heavenly Father, I thank you for your word. Thank you that you have spoken to the deep places of our souls, and sometimes it's really easy and refreshing to read, and other times it can be hard and challenging. And yet, every word of your word is life. And so as we open up your word now and spend some time on Deuteronomy 5.18, we pray that you would speak to the deep places of our heart, that you would bring your life and your love to those parts of us where it seems it's lacking. Do a great thing amongst us today. In Jesus' name, amen. Please be seated.

Well, the ancient Greeks had a lot of legends and myths, and I think sometimes when we teach Greek history, which those were some of my first degrees, we tend to make the false assumption that they really thought those legends and myths were true. And maybe some of them, that was the case. But in many cases, the myths and legends they told, they told knowing they weren't true stories, but that they communicated truth about life, like a parable. Well, one that's worth telling this morning is that there was this ancient myth of Jason the Argonauts. Jason was one of the greatest heroes that the Greek world had ever seen. He's not Hercules, he's not, but he is, he was an incredible fighter, good man, noble man.

Well, he and the Argonauts, they were not the Toronto football team, but rather another set of heroes. And he and all this, it was just multiple ships filled with heroes. We're all sailing off to fight, I can't remember what, but some horrible bad guy that was threatening their wives and their children back home. And so they got on these ships courageously, and they set out across the Aegean Sea to fight the bad guys. But Jason, knowing something of seas and all, knew that their path was going to take them across the, by the Isles of the Sirens. The Sirens were these famous demon women, who, these spirit demon women, who would sing this song. And this song was so compelling, so seductive, that even though every Greek boy knew, as he grew up to be a man, they knew that if they turned their ships toward the Sirens, they would be destroyed on the, on the horrible hidden rocks and everything.

They knew if they turned toward the Sirens, they would be destroyed. Every single sailor, every soldier, every warrior, whoever sailed past them, inevitably, despite themselves, would turn and try to get as close to the Sirens as possible with that seductive song, and would inevitably be destroyed.

Jason, unlike all those who'd gone before him, he knew that no matter how strong and great and famous he was, he was not strong enough. He knew that the people, his great warriors and the ships, the fleet of ships, they were not strong enough. And so Jason faced a problem. What would he do to get past the Sirens, to be able to protect his, their wives and their children back home? I share that story with you because Deuteronomy 5.18, we're going through the Ten Commandments week by week here in the summer.

[3 : 0 5] And as Jeremiah read, this is the text we're looking at today. It's not very complicated. And you shall not commit adultery. It's not very complicated. It's pretty straightforward.

Jesus in Matthew 5.27 tells us that it's not simply the act of committing adultery. It's not simply if a married woman or man has sex with someone they're not married to, that that's adultery. Jesus says that if you look at someone with lust, if you're having sexual fantasy, if you're engaging in any practice, any sexual activity that is not with your spouse as a married person, that that is adultery. And all of a sudden, as we look at what Jesus said in Matthew 5.27, we realize that this pretty straightforward commandment, one that might apply to this person or that person, actually speaks to every single one of us. The call not to lust is something that, like, we've, I'm sure if you've spent much time in church, you've heard before, that we shouldn't lust, we shouldn't have sexual fantasies or engage in sexual activity outside of marriage. And yet, if you look at the statistics or simply at your own heart, you know that every single one of us encounters a struggle with this this time or another time. It's something that we all deal with. And it's one of those things that, like, I, for a long time, was in youth ministry, young adult ministry. And so, you'd be brought into this context or that to speak about pornography and these things. And the thing is, like, I'd be brought into different contexts to speak about porn in different churches. And that, like, these youth pastors would say, like, come and, like, tell as many stories. Just honestly, they would say, like, tell as many stories as you can to scare these kids away from porn. I had someone email me one time saying, it was a young girl in university, she emailed me and said, I've been trying to stay away from porn, but I'm addicted and I can't. So, can you tell me a few more stories of how porn is linked to human trafficking? The idea was, if I could just somehow, like, scare her enough, tell her enough haunting stories, real stories, of how porn is tied to human trafficking, then she'd be able to fight against her lust.

For those of you who remember the 90s, if anybody was in, like, youth ministry in the 90s or attend a youth group, like, they used to bring in not stories of human trafficking, because we didn't talk about that as much in the 90s, but rather they'd bring these speakers to talk about STDs and then STDs and STIs, as if, like, you can scare people into purity. And the reality is it just doesn't work. You could, like, just like the Greek warriors, you could know that turning toward this lustful stuff is dangerous for you or that it's sinful. But if you just, you can fill yourself more and more and more with, I should not do this, I should not do this. And yet we find ourselves in, despite ourselves, and despite the truth we know, turning toward it. Now, perhaps you can't relate at all to the issue of the battle regarding lust or porn or adultery, but maybe there's another thing. You know something else that the Bible forbids gossip. You know you shouldn't gossip. And it just, you know, you're with your friend. You just can't help. You just find yourself inevitably gossiping again.

Or lying. Or anger and hate. Whatever it is. There's things that the Bible forbids that you and I know we shouldn't do, but we find ourselves turning toward it. What do we do about that?

Well, first, before we move on, it's important for us to note that everything the Bible forbids, everything that God forbids, he does it because he loves us. That's the context of the commandment.

[6 : 34] It's his love and commitment to our flourishing. And so, sometimes, like, I was at Camp Iowa last week, and I was chatting with some of the, they're, like, in grade 10, and I said, you know how, like, some of your youth leaders, you know, like, some of your camp leaders, you know they want you to have fun, right? They're just the most fun. And then there's always, like, that one cabin leader who just, like, seems like, like, every day is a Monday for them, right? They're just always in a bad mood, and they just, if it's fun, it's bad, right? They knew what I was talking about. Maybe you don't.

But, you know, there's just that one person. So, I said, you know what, some of us, we act as if God is that cabin leader, the one that, like, he sees us laughing, and he's, like, stop it, right? And that's how we relate to God sometimes. But really, God is a lot more like the cabin leader that you just know loves you so much and wants you to have so much fun. And that is the context of the commandments, that God is committed to our flourishing. And that's the context of all of this. Everything, therefore, that God says, don't do that. It's not because he's trying to, like, crimp our style or make us sad. He doesn't want us to laugh and have fun. But it's because everything he forbids, he does so for a reason. And the reason, there's a few, but everything that the scriptures show us is sinful. It's stuff that doesn't just hurt us, but hurts those around us. I share this with you because you and I in those places where we're wrestling with temptation, we so often will believe a lie that society tells us, that our decisions just affect us. It's why you hear so much rhetoric from politicians trying to change stuff about, well, like, it's just between two consenting adults, so whatever. Just let them be what they be. But that's this lie that your sin just affects yourself. And if you're sitting with someone else, it's just you and the other person.

When we engage in things the Bible forbids, it hurts those around us. Whether you find yourself just beginning to kind of hide away from people and you begin, like, just being more removed and kind of robbing your friends of a friend. Or you find yourself in so many different ways, and I'm not going to get into a whole, like, anti-porn talk right now, but specifically for pornography, like, it is intimately tied to human trafficking, right? And so it's one of those things where you find someone that they'll wrestle with this as if it just affects himself, but it's actually perpetuating really harmful, harmful stuff. It also gets in the way of our relationship with God and therefore our joy and our thriving and our sense of real intimacy and joy. And so as the scriptures, these different things in the Ten Commandments that the Bible forbids, it's forbidding them because God is committed to our and those we love, our thriving and our communities flourishing and our joy.

But what do we do when we find, despite knowing all those truths, that we find ourselves doing those things again? We'll go through that today. In 1 John 1, 9, it says that if we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

And that really is the first step to dealing with the temptations and the sin in our life. We find that when sin, when it's a secret, and it's amazing how much we can, what lengths we can go to keep our sin hidden. And we do it for the self-preservation, this idea that that is, in our own commitment to our thriving, that keeping our sin secret is the way forward.

[9 : 47] But sin is like mold. Mold, when it's in the darkness, like it just flourishes and grows. And at my parents' home in Stittsville, we had some mold problems. And so we picked up some spray and we spray it. It's like, oh, we got rid of the mold. And then like later that day, the mold's back, right? What we ended up having to do actually was to remove the curtains and to let the sun shine through. Because when you're able to shine a light on mold, the real light, the sun's light, it loses its grip on the wall. It actually begins to dissipate. And the same is true for our sin.

It's incredible how much we want to keep our sin hidden, but when we actually are able to confess it, all of a sudden it loses its grip on us. It's actually an incredible thing to watch.

And I've gone to see as a pastor, just kind of walking with people, is that you can have people who for years, this stuff just holds them, just owns them. And then it's a beautiful thing when you see someone find the courage, or sometimes it's that desperation, or simply the sanity, to say, you know what? It doesn't work to fight this on my own. And you can promise yourself again and again that you're going to try harder and do better and be more faithful, but you won't until you're able to confess it to someone. And this wisdom that we've learned over the years of who to confess to, you want to confess to someone who is not kind of at the same level of defeat in it as yourself. Sometimes you want to do that because then it's just kind of like you just kind of feel bad for each other, you know, pat each other on the back and be like, okay, we're both really miserable. But you want to find someone, perhaps your pastor or a trusted, someone who you know is walking to victory over that sin and be able to confess to them.

The second thing that we've observed over time chatting with George and other pastors is that, or just observing my own life, is that when we, is that sometimes when we finally want to confess to someone, we'll confess little pieces of our sin to different people. So no one, we're not really confessing how hurting and messed up we are. And so one of the things that I just want to encourage you today in trying to live out 1 John 1, 9, if you're trying to deal with habitual sin, something that you find yourself continue to go back and go back and go back to, is to find someone who's mature. Perhaps it's George, Jonathan Camere, Daniel Apton, some of the guys who, or surely some of the people that you know are seriously, you know, walking with the Lord. Come and confess to them and be committed to confessing every time you fall in this area. And at first it might not seem like you're having too much freedom, but over time you see that it begins to lose this grip on you. As long as our sin is hidden, it just, like it owns us.

David in Psalm 32 speaks right to this and he says that as long as he kept his sin hidden, he was talking about lust, adultery, as long as he kept it hidden, it was like the strength of his very bones was sapped. That when he confessed his sin, when he went public with it, all of a sudden the strength came back. It makes no sense. It's actually insanity for us to, we want to keep our sin hidden as if that's for our happiness, as if that's for our security. But when we do, we're self-imploding. The safest thing you can do, the happiest thing you can do, the thing that will restore your confidence and your freedom and your joy is to find the courage to confess.

[13 : 04] The second thing Jesus says in Matthew 5, 28 and 29, it's part of like the same paragraph when he says that if you lust, it's you've committed adultery. In Matthew 5, 28 and 29, he says that whatever part of you causes you to sin, cut it out. He says if your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out. If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. He was just talking about lust, so you can just continue on logically from there. If your penis causes you to sin, amputate it, etc.

Okay? Now Jesus is speaking, he's speaking metaphorically, but he's not exaggerating. Okay? Just as painful and as awkward as it would be and inconvenient to gouge out your eye, your hand, or an intimate part of your body. So also, we have to be that relentless with our sin.

Notice he didn't say, for those of you who are sitting in the front, like if you're Ross, then you need to take this seriously. He didn't say if you want to be on staff at the church, then cut out a part of your body. He says if any of you sin, then cut it out.

He's speaking to every single one of us. If you, every single one of us has to take your sin that seriously. So what is he saying? He's saying that thing that is your avenue towards sin, cut it out. Some of the ways I've seen girls and guys live this out around me is, one of my friends was addicted to porn, and they, you know, just kind of journaled, wrote down, what is their access to porn? And it was their phone. And so they got rid of their iPhone. You know, any other iPhone users here, you know that, like, that's not just a phone. It's part of our identity, right? They got rid of their iPhone and got a flip phone so that they couldn't have access to porn. Another friend of mine had a, was offered a job at Parliament Hill. This was a job they, like, they dreamed of getting.

It was a job that would be good on their resume. It would be much better money than the other jobs they could have gotten. But they knew they'd have unfiltered access to the internet. And so they turned down that job and got a much more menial job that was a lot more work and a lot less fun and paid significantly less because they were committed to just obeying Jesus. It wasn't their eye that was causing them to sin so much as that, that unfiltered internet at work. So they cut it out. For some of us, it might not be a technology we have to deal with, but a relationship. You can tell yourself and tell yourself that you're friends with them because you're influencing them to the gospel and all that stuff, but really, you know they're toxic. You know they're toxic. Whether it has to do with lust stuff or it has to do with gossip or anger or whatever it is, you know that being with them brings you down.

[15 : 38] And you can either treat Jesus' words as a joke or you can take it seriously. Those are your options. Take it seriously because there's life in obedience to Jesus.

The next thing in seeking out to live these words, do not commit adultery, is that confession is something that we initiate. That when you sin or you're feeling tempted, you confess to someone.

But the next thing we need that we sometimes confuse with it to is accountability. Accountability, unlike confession, where confession you initiate, accountability is where there's someone who's committed to walking with you. Someone that can text you or meet up with you or call you throughout the week and say, how are you doing? And specifically, ask them. Ask them to ask you the questions about your sin. And so, and so you ask questions like, have you looked up porn this week? Or whatever else the question you need to ask. Ask people to ask you those questions. And not just regarding the specific sinful behavior. But how we live this out is also by having someone ask us questions about our spiritual disciplines and our thriving. And so if you just focus simply on the sin aspect, you'll find that there's other things missing. But when you have someone who'll ask you, how's your time in the word this week? How's your time in prayer this week? And some of those questions, you'll find that it's going to help you be able to do the things you need to do to fight it.

And that brings us to the next one. In Psalm 119 verse 9, the psalmist writes, how can a young man keep his way pure? Young men, young women in the room, you know it is very hard to keep your way pure.

It feels sometimes like it's impossible. How can a young man keep his way pure? At first, it almost sounds like it's like a question of desperation. How can a young man keep his way pure? But he actually gives an answer. By guarding his way according to your word. By guarding your way according to your word. He's saying that the way that you and I are able to walk in purity is by this like, by like holding fast to the Bible. By holding fast to it. It's, the Bible refers to itself as, as food, as bread, as our spiritual nourishment. And so a really apt analogy. When I was in grade 12, my, my parents switched me from a school that was kind of far away to a school that was really far away.

[18 : 02] And so I'd have to get on the bus very early. And I was like the first stop or second stop. So by that, like we'd pick up everyone else. I had to get up like basically the day before, you know, in order to catch the bus to get to school the next, you know what I'm saying?

And so I had to get up super early. And I don't know about you, when I'm super tired, I have no appetite. Some of you might be the opposite. I just have no appetite. So get up super early. I was always super tired. I had to, and my mom, she's amazing. I'm, I'm really sorry for you if this is how you get introduced to my mom because she deserves better. But, um, my mom had this, like this ability to search out the most tasteless and flavorless and texturless cereal. And to be like, Hey, breakfast. Now she's amazing. Like this, it's just not fair to only share that story with you. Amazing woman. But just when it comes to cereal, this wasn't, wasn't the best. Okay.

And so I'd be there as nutritious, just didn't taste, feel or do anything good besides nutrition. And so I'd get up for myself cereal. I'd sit at the table already not hungry. Like I would have had trouble eating bacon and eggs. Um, and I'd be sitting there just force feeding myself this food.

Now, why did I do that? I didn't do it because my parents said I had to, because literally I don't think they actually cared. Okay. I did it because I wanted to have a good day. I wanted to thrive. I wanted to do well in school, you know? So because of that, I force fed myself the stuff that was nutritious. And the same is true for the Bible. There's times where you, there's certain, certain parts of the Bible you read. It's just like the words are jumping off the page to you.

And it feels like just, honestly, you think of whatever's your favorite food. It feels like that, you know? It tastes like bacon and eggs. I didn't have enough breakfast today. I'm really thinking about bacon and eggs. But, okay. But there's other times where it really, you read it. Deuteronomy is one of those parts of the Bible that more typically when you read, it will feel more like my mama's cereal.

[19 : 45] Okay. Where you read it and it's just like, it doesn't, doesn't feel like, doesn't captivate your interest. Okay. Or like the parable that Neil read, Luke 6, 1 to 9. Right? Where like it doesn't, the meaning doesn't just jump off the page at you. And yet, if, if you believe that the Bible is real, if you believe it really is God's word, then, then take what it says true, truly that, that the Bible feeds us. And so that's why we got to read through the pages of the Bible day after day after day. It's amazing. I'll, like, I've done this in my life. I've, I've seen others do this and meet up with where it's like, oh, I just, I can't beat this sin in my life. I'm just, I just feel far from God. Oh. And then you'll start asking about, like, are you in the word? Well, no. Or, or how's your Bible reading? Oh, really good. And then you find they're just only reading your, I'm, I'm only reading my favorite parts of the Bible, the parts that just jump out at me. But, but every, every page of scripture is God breathed. It's all for our good. You know, when Jesus is feeling temptation, and he's in, in Matthew 4, I think, Jesus is battling temptation, and, um, how does he beat the temptation? Do you know? He quotes the Bible, right? He's feeling temptation, and he holds, he's doing what

Psalm 119, 9. Jesus is a young man, and he's guarding his way according to the word. He's, he speaks out loud, what the Bible says. Do you know that every verse Jesus quotes against the temptation, it's all from one book of the Bible. Do you know what it is? It's Deuteronomy. Question, like, can you and I, when we're feeling temptation, when we're wrestling with sin, can you and I quote Deuteronomy at our temptation? Could you, like, do you even know what Deuteronomy talks about, right? There's parts of the Bible, not just you, that, that me also will really struggle with, um, being able to hold fast to, because you don't read it, right? It's one of the reasons it's so important to be at a church like Church of the Messiah. It's not the only one, but it's definitely one, where there were, we're faithfully going through the Bible, and you'll see, like, we were committed to preaching through the Bible, so you'll see that, and reading through the Bible, so Neil read a part of the Bible that is, seems more difficult to wrestle with, but, but this church consistently is, is preaching through the tough stuff of the Bible, but it's not enough to get that once a week on Sundays, but for us to be daily devoted to reading through the Bible, wrestling with what the Bible says, eating it up. It feeds us, just like that cereal, whether you feel it or not, it still feeds you. Um, an analogy that George has shared a couple years ago that I want to remind you of. George shared that the Bible is like, um, it's, it's like the, uh, you're on a quest, you know, um, if you've read *The Silver Chair*, there's other books like this, right? *Silver Chair* by C.S. Lewis. So these, these kids, they get this riddle at the start of their quest, and they're like, they're put, they're mulling over their heads, they're mulling over their heads, and it doesn't make sense. It's some poetic thing, and then along the quest, at one point, like, things come to folks, and they see that Ridge of the Mountains, and also they recall that that speaks to the, like, that, that, that riddle actually is about that, and then they're able to know how to navigate it. George said the Bible is like that, and he's right, the Bible's like that, that there's things that will speak to us as we're reading through it, and it doesn't seem to make a lot of sense, and then you're in a situation, and all of a sudden it pulls the situation to focus. The only way you're going to be able to remember what that riddle said is by mulling it over, holding fast to it, and that's why men and women who are faithful to the end in their walk with God, who are thriving in what God made them for, are people who are reading through the Bible, and when you get to the end, to start again, and be reading through it, and reading through it. How can a young man or young woman walk in purity? By living according to God's Word. And before moving on, for so many of us, purity, it seems to be something that we're convinced means, like, the absence of defilement. So our goal to live pure is just to be free of lust, to be free of gossip, to be free of anger. But when the scriptures speak of purity, it never is only speaking of being rid of sin, but rather it's a life that is teeming with the fullness of God. And so you'll see as you read through the letters in the New Testament, that when it speaks of, like, putting to death sin, it always also speaks about clothing yourselves with compassion, and kindness, and generosity, and worship, singing psalms, and hymns, and spiritual psalms, like it says in Colossians 3. You'll see that again and again and again.

It talks, Paul will write about fleeing sin, and then, and then, like, running the race, running toward the prize. What you run from catches up with you, in a sense, but what you run toward, you'll find that if you're only focused on just putting to death sin, you'll find somehow, like, it still owns you. It's still your focus. It still occupies your thoughts, and compels you toward it.

But as you do the things you need to do, confess your sin, amputate the avenues toward sin, bring accountability into life, be reading the Word, and as you begin to give yourself to the stuff, not only that the Bible calls us to put to death, but give yourself to the pursuit of living a life with Jesus. Compassionate hearts, kindness, humility. As you actively engage in what God calls us to, we find that the freedom begins to be part of it. You know that just, one of the things in, in the helping people get free of porn and other lust issues that we found, one of the number one reasons that people will relapse into this stuff is boredom. And I've chatted with psychologists who, like, they say, like, they used to be simply focused on, like, getting to those childhood issues, and, or, like, you were abandoned as a kid, and, like, you're trying to deal with that stuff to try to, like, help people get free. And some of those questions can be good to deal with, but part of it is just that issue of boredom, which is why, again, the Bible, who knew, is so wise as it calls, not just to put things to death, but then to engage in the epic work that God is doing today. It is, we actually begin to join Jesus in what he's doing, and to fill our time with the stuff of

God, to give ourselves to purity. You find that there's actually so much more strength to put that stuff to death. And so, again, before moving on, what is our mandate? What is that stuff we're called to?

[26 : 04] Well, it's a really answer that I got to read through the Word. Day after day, you'll see the Bible speaks to it. But very simply put, Jesus, at the start of his ministry, reads his mission statement. It's an ancient prophecy found in Isaiah 61. Jesus reads it over himself. This is his mission statement, not just 2,000 years ago, but today. This is Jesus' mission statement. And it's relevant to you to me because to be a child of God, to be a Christian, is to be a follower of Jesus. So if that's Jesus' mission statement, then whether you know it or not, this is your and my mission statement for today and every day of our lives. This is our mission statement. And Isaiah 61, it says that he is anointed to preach the gospel to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, to bring freedom to captives, to open the eyes of the blind, to be bringing hope to those who don't have hope, to bring the truth of who Jesus is to those who don't know it. And freedom from captivity, that encompasses so much. To be advocating for victims, whether it's sexual abuse or human trafficking, that type of stuff. But even, not only that, but how many of those around us who might be living what seems to be lives of freedom are actually captive to their own lusts, or captive to the pain of bitterness in their hearts, to be captive to unforgiveness, who are in prison of their own unforgiveness.

And Jesus today, and tomorrow when you're back at work, is seeking to set people free from those cages. And how does he do it? But through his hands and feet, the church, you and me.

I share this with you because a huge part of defeating the lusts and sins of our life, to being able to have the ability to stay away from the stuff that the Ten Commandments tell us to stay away from, is as we engage in the beautiful calling that he has in our lives.

It really isn't optional. To follow Jesus, to be a Christian, is to give ourselves to this work. There's more. Romans 12, 1 and 2 says that we are able to present ourselves wholly to God, that we can't find that strength to do that. As we present ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, through the renewal of our minds. And this is one of the beautiful truths we find that the Bible just was way ahead of all the psychologists. That when you're seeking to change your behavior, to change your lustful thoughts and behaviors, that a huge part of it isn't just focusing on, again, trying hard or promising this. You actually have to renew your mind.

And how do we do that? But again, by reading the scriptures, by meditating on them, giving ourselves to that. Now, when people have, whether for myself or others, when we're talking about dealing with this stuff, so often what we're looking at is behavior modification.

[28 : 47] We see it says don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't lie, all this different stuff that the scriptures call us to not do. And so we want to change our behaviors. And so we're looking, okay, I'm going to confess my sin. And I'm going to, you know, amputate my access to it. I'm going to do these things. But ultimately, what we're actually looking at isn't just behavior modification, but a heart transformation. Because Jesus actually says, I don't have it written down.

Snap. I think it's actually Matthew 18, where Jesus says that it's out of the heart that unlawful talk comes a harmful speech and sexual morality. And he lists off a whole different bunch of examples of sin. Ultimately, what's happening when we find ourselves living out harmful behavior, disobeying God, is that it's not just a behavior problem. It's a heart problem. There's brokenness in our hearts.

Which brings us back to Jason. How did Jason get past? How did he get past, or how did he deal with the sirens? He didn't just say, you know what, I'm going to tell myself as many horrible stories of sailors who dashed themselves on the rocks. And that will motivate me to freedom, to not go to them. Jason knew that wouldn't be enough. Others had tried it. So Jason brought with himself Orpheus, the world's greatest harpist. And so as they got close to the sirens, Jason said, Orpheus, play your song. And as Orpheus began to play a greater song, a more beautiful song, that filled the minds, that captivated the minds, the hearts, and the very souls of those sailors. They were able to get past the sirens. And that, again, is a truth that the Greeks wrestled with, and one of the scriptures already spoke of. In 2 Corinthians 3, 18, let's turn there now.

The Bible says, And we all with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

What is it saying there? It's beautiful poetry. But it's saying that where we are able to be transformed. We didn't have the strength to stay away from that sinful thoughts or behaviors, and now we have the strength to flourish.

[31 : 12] Where we didn't, where we just, as much as we thought, oh, it would be so good to join Jesus in what he's doing, to be able to share the gospel with my co-worker, you're just, you're still too shy. Where we find that strength that transforms us, is as we behold Jesus.

As we turn our attention to him, let the beauty of who God is, and what he's done, and what he's doing in our lives, as we let the beauty of the gospel, not just be something that we're looking at with our mind, but actually, as we let it, like, captivate our hearts.

As we fall in love with who Jesus is, and what he's doing, what he's about. That actually transforms us. That we are to behold and to savor who Jesus is.

So, that's one of the reasons that we spend time in worship. It's not just about singing some songs, or doing, like, Christian karaoke, we have the words on the screen, we sing along. But to actually, like, feast on those words.

Pray to be in awe of those truths. To revel in the beauty of who Jesus is, and what he's doing, and what he's done for us.

[32 : 20] That's where we find this magnificent transformation. There's a scene, perhaps you already know, where this sinful woman, this adulterous woman, comes to Jesus among all these very good guys.

Their lives are empty of darkness in so many ways. And they think that that's purity. And this woman, she has lusted and committed adultery, all this stuff. And she's on her knees at Jesus' feet, crying, just, like, wiping Jesus' feet with her tears and her hair.

And in that culture, that'd be very intimate. In our culture, just be weird, but they're just very intimate acts. And these Pharisees are like, okay, Jesus, do you not know who she is? Thinking they're the ones who are pure, because their lives are absent of a lot of bad behavior.

And Jesus says, he who's forgiven much, loves much. Ultimately, purity isn't simply about filling our lives with the stuff of God, but there really is, at the heart of it, about a love for Jesus.

These guys, their lives are so absent of all this bad behavior, but their hearts are far from God. And because of that, they don't love him, their hearts are dead. As a kid, like, I was a homeschool kid.

[33 : 31] Didn't, like, I, when I went, finally went to school, I never got a detention. Like, I, my life was devoid of a lot of bad stuff. And so I'd read that, and I'd be a little perplexed. Like, okay, I don't feel like I've been forgiven much.

So do I get to love much? And then as I kept reading through the Bible, I found that, even though I hadn't, like, lived out a lot of those more, like, whatever stuff, that, you know, I had, I had committed adultery.

So I'd lusted. And I had murdered, because I've been angry. And Jesus says that to be, to hate your brother is to, is to commit murder. And I found that as you actually wrestle with what the reality is of what Jesus has forgiven us, you and me, of every single one of us is just like that woman.

Those Pharisees were just like that woman. Except, instead of receiving Jesus' forgiveness, and then devoting themselves to him, they sat there, unmoved with their hearts dead.

Just last year, he was preaching from one of these passages about putting our sin to death and Jesus' forgiveness.

[34 : 38] In Colossians 3, it says, Paul's writing about these very serious sins, sexual morality and idolatry and all this different stuff. And then to those same people, he says, now is God's holy and beloved.

Close yourself with the stuff of God. And so I was preaching that evening to these kids and my buddy who drove me there. I shared with them, you know what? Maybe there's a time right now, or maybe it's in years from now, that you need to hear these words, that you're God's holy and beloved.

That even as you've done horrific stuff, you don't recognize yourself. You feel so far from God. You've done something you thought you'd never do. If you look to Jesus for forgiveness, you're his holy and beloved.

I talked about the reality of his forgiveness. We drove home. It was two hours. Got to my house. And just as I was about to get out of my car, I don't know why, I just turned to my buddy.

And I said, hey, did you want to talk about anything else? It was late. And he said, yeah. And he confessed to me that he'd committed, about a year and a half before, horrific crimes against a child.

[35 : 38] He said, what do I need to know? What do I need to do? What do I need to hear? Well, on the one hand, everything in me just, well, you knew how I would have felt. But standing upon the Bible, I had to look him in the eye and say, you're God's holy and beloved.

I had to hug him, embrace him, who I knew had used intimacy in horrific ways. Just hug him and held him. You're God's holy and beloved. Just like this woman who's been forgiven much, you've also been called to love much.

And we went from there to the police station. He turned himself in and he went to jail. The police officers, I remember them questioning him, grilling him, grilling him. Why did you turn yourself in? You never were going to be caught.

Now you're going to go to jail. And he just, he said to the police officers through tears, God is a God of love. He's come into my life. And that love means this kid getting help. The kid only gets help if I come forward.

And he said, God is a God of justice. That means I go to jail. God is a God of freedom. That means I have to turn myself in. He found, I just was on the phone with him this past week.

[36 : 45] He found freedom even behind prison bars, legit, as he confessed his sin. And this memory he was trying to suppress and hide from and keep secret, and he managed to do that successfully. He was in a far greater prison than when he actually went to jail.

I tell this story because every single one of us is like this guy. That every single one of us is stuff that we want to keep hidden and secret. And just like him, our sin, maybe it's not on such a grand, like a large scale, but our sin has hurt other people, whether we understand how it does or not.

And just like him, we can think that we're living in freedom, but really we're in a prison that's so much worse. But just like this guy, we can run into the light and confess our sin.

It can feel scary, but it is the place of safety. I just spoke with him on the phone. It's a year later. And this guy, he just got out of prison. It's a lot of conditions on his freedom, all this stuff.

But the joy that this guy knows in the forgiveness he's found in God is a beautiful thing, and it is a joy that you and I can have today. And so I want to invite you to this week to come forward and confess whatever stuff you need to confess, to engage in the battle of putting sin to death, to give ourselves to the call to join Jesus in what he's doing, bringing light into the darkness.

[38 : 14] But more than anything to realize that you and I can walk in freedom and joy, not because of how good we're doing or bad we're doing on a given week, but because Jesus has forgiven us. Because ultimately, the call to purity is not simply about a life devoid of sin or even a life that's full and busy with the epic stuff of God.

But you and I and anyone else who's pure is pure because of Jesus' forgiveness. That's why we talk about the cross so much and sing songs about this and all this stuff. It's because of Jesus.

Let's pray. Would you stand with me? Heavenly Father, as we mentioned this morning that the things the Bible forbids cause harm to ourselves or others, I know that for some of us, it feels all too real.

That the sins that others have committed have harmed us in such brutal ways. Even just talking about the stories they have legit can be triggering for us.

For others of us, maybe for all of us as well. God, we've defamed you. We've sinned against you in all manner of different ways.

[39 : 27] And yet, just like that woman on her knees with tears coming down her face, encountered the beauty, the awe-inspiring glory of your forgiveness, God, would you fill our hearts afresh in awe and wonder at your forgiveness, at the gospel, that you who knew no sin became sin, that we might be the righteousness of God, whether we're murderers or adulterers or any sort of anything.

God, for those of us who have been harmed by this stuff, would you bring healing and wholeness? For every one of us, God, bring your forgiveness and freedom. You would help us to live out the call to not commit adultery, but instead, to live life as forgiven people, walking in the fullness of purity to your glory.

In Jesus' name, amen.