

Blessed are the Pure in Heart

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[0 : 0 0] Now, have you ever been to a coffee shop or to a breakfast restaurant and you've reached for a packet of sugar? If you're one of those people who puts sugar in your coffee, like me, thereby ruining your coffee, I ruin it.

And you read the, have you ever read the label on that little packet of sugar? Some of them just say sugar because they're shortened to the point. And that's okay, but maybe if you're lucky, you're going to get one of those packets that's labeled pure sugar because it's obviously so much better than the other sugar packets, right?

The word pure signifies that everything inside of that packet is sugar. There's no impurity.

There's no contamination. So when that packet says pure sugar, what it's saying to you is this, you can trust me, consumer. There's no sawdust.

There's no cat litter in this packet, right? So now that we're all going to be paranoid about what we're actually putting in our coffee with those non-pure sugar packets, you and I, we should perhaps be much more concerned.

[1 : 1 3] You know, in this day and age, people are very concerned about what they're putting in their bodies, what kind of things. We should be far more alert about what's going on in our hearts, but what's inside of our hearts.

What are the desires? What are the thoughts? What are the emotions that make up who we are inside? And we should be concerned because Jesus of Nazareth was very concerned about what's going on in here.

Jesus, our Lord and our Savior, he was concerned about what's going on in here. Whether our hearts themselves were pure. Whether our hearts were free from contamination. Free from defilement.

As Jesus introduced his most famous sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapter 5, Jesus began with a series of promises. These promises have come to be known as the Beatitudes.

And these promises illustrated this unexpected kingdom, the kingdom of God, that Jesus was planning to bring to the earth. A very different kingdom from anything the world has ever seen or known.

[2 : 1 4] Now, in our culture, in our kingdom, we value people who are image conscious. Who fake it till you make it. That's the common expression.

You know, people who devote themselves to looking really good on the outside. While many people also have grown tired of that, and so they go the whole other way.

They say, you know, we should embrace the authentic self. Embrace who you are underneath. Expose all your warts and ugliness with the expectation that other people should see those warts and ugliness and should celebrate them.

Should celebrate you for who you are. The authentic you. The Beatitude of our culture reads, Congratulations to the image conscious and to the authentic.

For they shall rub shoulders with great people. Congratulations to the image conscious and the authentic. For they shall rub shoulders with great people. But, in the sixth Beatitude, Jesus promised something unexpected.

[3 : 13] Blessed are the pure in heart. For they shall see God. Blessed are the pure in heart. For they shall see God. Now, what this means, first of all, is Jesus doesn't want you and Jesus doesn't want me to be fake.

It also means that Jesus doesn't want us to be merely authentic. Because you can be authentically evil. Jesus wants us to be pure in heart.

Now, under the Old Testament law, that idea of being pure or clean, that meant that a person's body was not defiled by things that were corrupted with disease, with decay or death.

Hadn't come in contact with unclean things. The scholar R.A. Finlayson explains what it means to be pure in heart. On the inside, he says, Purity indicates a state of heart where there is complete devotion to God.

As unadulterated water is said to be pure. And gold without alloy is pure gold. So the pure heart is the undivided heart where there is no conflict of loyalties, no cleavage of interests, no mixture of motives, no hypocrisy, and no insecurity.

[4 : 41] It's a devoted, undivided heart. There's no contamination in it. Jesus says that people with a heart that is completely devoted to God, people whose devotion is undivided, they will be blessed.

That's Jesus' way of saying, they will experience the good life. And Jesus says that this is what will make their life blessed. He says, they will see God.

They will see God. They will experience God for who he is. They will see that God is great, God is good, God is with us. Those with a pure heart will find life in knowing God.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. So this is what we learn. God's people purify their hearts to experience their all-satisfying God.

God's people purify their hearts to experience the all-satisfying God. A God who is not only good, but he is great, so that his goodness is all-satisfying.

[5 : 52] Now there is another side of the coin to this beatitude. If we take it and we turn it around, here's what it tells us. Cursed are those with impure hearts, for they will never see God.

Cursed are those with impure hearts, for they will never see God. And so we would do well to long for, to pray for, to fight for, a pure heart.

Now the Bible reveals many desires, many thoughts, many behaviors of an impure heart. If you look at study in the New Testament, what purity looks like, it brings up things like people who are not falling prey to controversies, to quarrels, to rivalries.

But if we focus specifically on the immediate context of what Jesus is saying when he says, blessed are the pure in heart, if we look just at the Sermon on the Mount, there's one area of purity that really stands out.

If the other side of this beatitude is cursed are those with impure hearts, for they will never see God, well Jesus more or less says that very directly, with regard to a very specific sin, with regard to a very specific form of impurity.

[7 : 08] And you see that in verses 27 through 30 of Matthew chapter 5. Jesus says, You have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery.

But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.

For it is better that you lose one of your members and that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Last week we spoke extensively about the seventh commandment as we proceeded through the book of Exodus. The seventh commandment that says, you shall not commit adultery. We learned that this commandment, it broadly covers sexual immorality of all forms.

Sex outside of a one man, one woman marriage. It even covers sexual desires or thoughts for someone other than your spouse. That's what Jesus is specifically talking about here.

[8 : 18] And Jesus says here that someone with a heart that is made impure by adulterous thoughts, adulterous motives, is in grave danger of never seeing God.

Jesus says that a person like that is in danger of being, in his words, thrown into hell. In danger of suffering, eternal misery, eternal torment, no hope of escape, under the judgment of the almighty God.

So last week we looked at the battlefield of sexual sin and we looked at it from an eagle's eye view, from far overhead. And this week we are descending down into the trenches to examine how we wage war.

How we wage war against sexual sin as Jesus commands you and me to do. Now God's people purify their hearts to experience their all satisfying God. So we make war against sexually immoral desires, thoughts, and actions.

We make war against our sexually immoral desires, thoughts, and actions. To wage war. Here's what we have to do. We have to study the enemy, we have to form a battle plan, and we have to do battle together.

[9 : 31] We're going to need to learn how to do that. And the place that we're going to turn to learn how to do that is the New Testament book of Hebrews, chapter 12. If you've got one of those blue Bibles that Russia's handed out, turn to page 1009.

Hebrews chapter 12. Now there is a strong connection in Hebrews 12 to the beatitude that we've read. So if you remember, the beatitude reads, blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Then in Hebrews chapter 12, verse 14, we read this, strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. That purity in heart, the holiness, that you need to see God to see the Lord.

The idea is the same. Both Jesus and the author of this letter to the Hebrews, they're speaking the words of that same Holy Spirit, the same author of all of Scripture, and they're saying that a person with a pure and a holy heart is going to see God, and only such a person is going to see God.

God's people purify their hearts to experience their all-satisfying God. Let's zoom out a little. Let's read the context that's surrounding Hebrews chapter 12, verse 14.

[10 : 52] Let's see how the author helps us make war against sexually immoral desires, thoughts, and actions. So we'll go back to verse 12 and read through verse 17.

Therefore, lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

Strive for peace with everyone and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God, that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled, that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal.

For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears. Now first, notice as we saw in verse 14 that we will not see the Lord unless our lives are marked by purity or holiness.

We would be pure and holy like God is. You and I, we aren't saved on the basis of our purity and holiness. We don't see the Lord because of my, just purely my own purity and holiness, and I waltz into God's presence because I'm such a great person.

[12 : 27] If that were the case, we would be without hope because there's not a man or a woman or a child in this room who is pure and spotless all on their own. That's what we just sang about.

We're saved from the wrath of God. We're saved from hell, from what Jesus talked about because God has provided Jesus Christ to be our holiness, to stand in our place, to die on the cross in our place, bearing the penalty that we deserved for impure hearts.

The thing is, Jesus has now been raised to a new life. Everyone who's united to Jesus by faith is now called to join Jesus in his blessed life, in the good life, his resurrection life.

If you and I, if we're not striving for purity and holiness, what we're doing is we're demonstrating we don't know that new life. We don't participate in Jesus' new life.

We're demonstrating that our faith in Jesus is a fraud. It's not genuine that we're not going to be saved on the day of judgment. So we're not saved on the basis of our own purity and holiness, but we're also not saved without it either.

[13 : 46] And that's why the author of Hebrews is directing us to tremble. To tremble as we consider the case of Esau. Esau was the son of Isaac, the brother of Jacob.

You can read about him in the book of Genesis, the first book of the Bible. The author has said in verse 14 that without holiness no one will see the Lord. And in verse 16 he says that Esau was unholy.

And he explicitly identifies for us one form of Esau's unholiness. That Esau was sexually immoral. Now, sexual immorality, adultery, these aren't the only sins the author of Hebrews is warning us against.

There's so much more to it than that. But they really are one of the most potent forms of impurity and unholiness. They're one of the chief reasons, both in our experience and as laid out in scripture, that one of the chief reasons causes that men and women like you and me abandon Jesus Christ.

That we turn away from the good life that Jesus promises to a counterfeit form of the good life that delivers nothing but death. Here's the dynamic by which sexual sin causes trouble in the church and the local community of believers.

[15 : 04] It's found in verse 15. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God that no root of bitterness springs up and causes trouble and by it many become defiled.

So what is that root of bitterness? We need to watch out for a root of bitterness and what is it? Well, it's a reference to Deuteronomy chapter 29. That's where Moses commands the people of Israel with these words.

you know how we lived in the land of Egypt and how we came through the midst of the nations through which you passed and you have seen their detestable things, their idols of wood and stone, of silver and gold which were among them.

Beware, lest there be among you a man or woman or clan or tribe whose heart is turning away today from the Lord our God to go and serve the gods of those nations.

beware, lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit. One who, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, blesses himself in his heart saying, I shall be safe though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.

[16 : 23] So what is that root of bitterness? What is that root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit? Well, Moses says that it's he identifies it as a man or woman whose heart is turning away from the Lord our God to go and serve other gods.

So this person is like an invasive weed that corrupts the whole church, that gets in there and corrupts everything. This person has a corrupted heart, an impure heart, a heart whose loyalties are divided between the Lord God on the one hand and some other master on the other hand.

And the author of Hebrews says that if you don't break out the roundup and go after this weed, the root of bitterness, this person will cause trouble.

And through this person's influence, many will become defiled. Many other people will also become corrupted with impure and unholy hearts.

And in particular, that's how it works with sexual sin. If we permit one of our brothers and sisters in Christ to maintain a heart that is divided by sexual sin, if we allow adultery, if we allow sexual immorality to linger or to fester in our church, it is going to produce one of two outcomes.

[17 : 47] On the one hand, that person, the root of bitterness, may draw other people into sexual sin as well. May pull them in as well. On the other hand, maybe the discovery of that sexual sin will detonate in the church like a firecracker.

Many angry, betrayed people, some even abandoning God's family, the church. In the history of Squamish, we've seen one church in our town destroyed by the revelation of sexual sin.

This is a real thing that really destroys churches, that really shipwrecks people's souls. That's why Moses warned, beware lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit.

One who, when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, what does he do? He blesses himself in his heart. I'm blessed. Now I'm doing what's right.

I'm living the good life, saying, I shall be safe, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart. So the author of Hebrews directs us to look at Esau.

[18 : 52] Esau is just this kind of person. Now we don't learn a lot about Esau's sexual sin from the Old Testament book of Genesis. We get some hints of it. He married two Canaanite women who were a source of great sorrow, great misery to his parents.

You kind of wonder what the backstory was behind all that. We do know that Esau was just the sort of man, the exact sort of man, who would be entrapped, who would be enslaved by sexual desire.

His heart, his loyalty divided. Esau was the firstborn son of Isaac, and in that culture, the firstborn received his father's special blessing. The firstborn carried on the family name.

He received the lion's share of his father's property in that culture. So that was Esau's birthright. This great privilege and honor to carry on the family legacy.

In Genesis chapter 25, Esau gave it all up. He gave up his birthright. Once when Jacob was cooking stew, Jacob being his brother, Esau came in from the field, and he was exhausted.

[20 : 03] And Esau said to Jacob, let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted. Therefore his name was called Edom. Edom means red, so that's sort of like a little background information there.

Jacob said, sell me your birthright now. Obviously these were model brothers. Esau said, I am about to die.

Of what use is a birthright to me? Jacob said, swear to me now. So he swore to him and sold his birthright to Jacob.

Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank and rose and went on his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

He treated it like it was nothing. The commentator, William Lane, describes this as a rash and thoughtless rejection of the gifts of God.

[21 : 07] A rash and thoughtless rejection of the gifts of God. That's what sexual sin is. It's giving up the good life.

Giving up the blessed life. Giving up the opportunity to see God in all his beauty and his glory forever and ever. That birthright that we have as Christians, it's selling it for a tasty bowl of stew.

That's what it is. It's trading away your future and the legacy of God's people so you can satisfy a momentary craving.

I'm really hungry. I'm going to die if I don't get this. Just as Esau despised his birthright, so it is that when you and I commit sexual sin, give in to sexual temptation, we're despising the God who is good.

We're saying God's not worth it. Being able to see God face to face, man, I've got better things. So the author of Hebrews writes, See to it that no one is sexually immoral or unholy like Esau who sold his birthright for a single meal.

[22 : 23] For you know that afterward when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected for he found no chance to repent though he sought it with tears. So what happened to Esau in the following chapters could happen to you and it could happen to me.

Esau missed the window of opportunity. He missed that window of opportunity. He missed his chance to turn around, to repent, to turn back from his sin and so when he sought his birthright with tears, when he was pleading with his father, it was too late.

It was already gone. Esau was filled with regret for the consequences of his sin. For the consequences.

He didn't hate the sin itself. He didn't repent. He didn't turn away when he had the chance. Only when it came back and bit him in the end did he weep.

Now why did Esau not admit his error? Why did he not turn away from his rash and thoughtless sin before it was too late? It's because he was a slave.

[23 : 34] He was a slave in the deepest sense of the word. A slave to the power of sin. A slave to that desire. There is no more crippling slavery than that. It had taken control of him.

It had become his master. It owned him. The 17th century preacher Thomas Watson he writes about sexual sin in particular when he says this.

This sin impairs the mind. It steals away the understanding. It stupefies the heart. And then he quotes Hosea chapter 4 verse 11.

Whoredom and wine take away the heart. It eats out all heart for good. It'll eat you alive. It'll twist you.

Sexual sin twists your ability to think. It warps your ability to reason. It prevents you from understanding the consequences of what you're doing.

[24 : 41] There is a very real very neurological sense that we're only just beginning to learn about scientifically speaking in which sexual sin is an addiction just as surely as an addiction to cocaine or meth or heroin or fentanyl.

You feel that I need this to survive. I will die if I don't get my fix. And when you are needing to survive you will do anything.

You will say anything. I need that bowl of stew. I will die if I don't get it. What use is my birthright to me?

All the faculties of your body and your mind will be bent towards serving this counterfeit God. So imagine what would happen if you were enslaved to such a God never able to extract yourself from the desire for a man or a woman or an image who is not your spouse.

What if in spite of your desires you could never have the object of your craving? What if day by day week by week your slavery twisted you into a grotesque shell of your former self? What if you could never escape the angry presence of the one true God who denies you what you seek?

[26 : 00] What if you could never find relief from his wrath from the physical and the psychological suffering under his mighty hand? In Matthew chapter 5 Jesus uses a word that describes that wretched state if it's extended into eternity forever and ever and he calls it Gehenna.

We translate this word into English using the word hell under the wrath of God forever and ever. Strive for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

You either see and enjoy the Lord forever and ever or you see him and you're trapped and it twists you and you're under his wrath.

We can't let that happen to us brothers and sisters. We cannot let that happen to us. This is a war that we have to win at any cost. Any cost. We cannot hold our troops in reserve.

We cannot let the desires of the flesh run their course without opposition. we fight. We combat sexual sin first by making war and second by making peace.

[27 : 18] First by making war second by making peace. Let's talk about the first way. First we make war. Hebrews chapter 12 verse 12. Lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees and make straight paths for your feet so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.

He's saying hey get up get moving. You know no more of these sorry mumbled excuses you know no more self pity oh I can't help myself.

No more victim mentality stand up begin marching. It is time now while it is still today to study the enemy to form a battle plan to do battle together alongside your brothers and sisters in Christ.

First you make war by studying the enemy the primary enemy in the battle against sexual sin it is not the world. We love to blame the world like oh look at all the you know this how sexually depraved our culture is.

It's not the world it's not the devil because they are powerless without the desires of your flesh. If you don't have that desire inside of you they can't do a thing.

[28 : 35] If you do have that desire inside of you they don't have to do anything. You're still going to go after what you want. So you study the enemy by examining the patterns of temptation in your own life.

That's the first place you start. Take a look. Take a look at yourself. One of the most helpful pieces I've ever read on this subject is an article that was written by Brad Hambrick. Brad Hambrick is according to his website he's the pastor of counseling at the Summit Church in Durham, North Carolina.

Brad Hambrick wrote an article titled 19 possible motive triggers for pornography. 19 possible motive triggers for pornography.

And so for example Hambrick identifies that one motive trigger for sexual sin is boredom. Boredom. Our response is that he says is sexual sin is our joy.

We turn to sin as our joy. And Hambrick explains this dynamic. He offers scripture to teach us how instead of turning to sin as our joy when we're bored we turn to the Lord as our joy instead.

[29 : 42] And then he does the same for 18 other motive triggers. Loneliness, stress, frustration, fatigue, hurt, betrayal, bitterness, opportunity, rejection, failure, success, entitlement, desire to please, time of day, location, negative self thoughts, publicity, and weakness.

If you didn't get all that down that's okay. After the service you can check our church's Facebook page or you can check the news and updates section of our website. There will be a link to that article there.

I strongly encourage you to read it. It's good for combating any sort of sexual sin in your life and really any sin in general. It will be very helpful for us to examine when are we tempted and why are we being tempted.

What are we turning to sin for? What do we think we need it for? And recognizing that we can find satisfaction and joy in the Lord instead.

It's important to know in what particular circumstances you are going to be the most tempted to turn to sexual sin as that drug that's going to make it all better. That counterfeit savior is going to rescue you.

[30 : 52] You make war by studying the enemy. And sadly too often the enemy is us. Second, you make war by forming a battle plan.

Forming a battle plan. So this takes us back to Jesus' words about sexual sin that we read in Matthew chapter five. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.

For it is better that you lose one of your members and that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members and that your whole body go into hell.

In other words, what Jesus is saying is this. The battle plan response to sexual sin is radical amputation. It's radical amputation.

You can't toy around with this stuff. If you've gotten a rotten tooth, you've got to pull it out. You can't take half measures. You can't just assume, well, I'll do better next time.

[31 : 54] No, you won't. You will not do better next time. If there is a particular situation, if there is a particular person that you find just sucks you into sexual sin, your response has to be to utterly remove that situation from your life or utterly remove that person from your life, no matter what the cost.

Period. That's Jesus' command. I say that with full authority of Jesus Christ. You have to remove it. If you don't, you're disobeying Jesus. one of my regrets in ministry is a time when I was meeting weekly with a man who was addicted to pornography and he was trying to fight against it.

He had accountability software installed in his home and computer that would send me a report. He had filters that would block out pornography websites, but any filter is imperfect.

The smallest breach in the filter that he would happen to stumble across over the course of his day's work. The smallest breach in the filter, he would just go to town, he would hurl himself headlong into porn, and this would happen week after week, month after month.

I was a coward. I didn't have the courage that Jesus has, because what I should have done is I should have told him the hard truth that Jesus would have told him.

[33 : 26] I should have told him that it was time to shutter or sell off his business, because it required him to use a computer. That he had to go home and throw out his home computer.

He had to find work that didn't involve using a computer. He would have to reduce his family's standard of living in order to accommodate this new line of employment. It seems so extreme, but so does tearing out your eye and severing your hand.

That's the point. That's what he had to do. It's a harsh prescription, but it is Jesus' prescription. The reason Jesus gives this prescription is because it is the only realistic way.

If you think any other way is going to get you out of sin, you're in denial. You have no idea what a stranglehold this has in your life. I can quit anytime I want to.

No, you can't. The only realistic prescription to combating the extreme enslaving power of sexual sin. Radical amputation.

[34 : 32] In fact, Jesus says explicitly that you must cut off contact with people in your life who are tempting you irresistibly to sexual sin. Matthew chapter 18, here's what Jesus says, whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.

Woe to the world for temptations to sin. For it is necessary that temptations come, but woe to the one by whom the temptation comes. And if your hand or your foot cause you to sin, cut it off and throw it away.

It is better for you to enter life crippled or lame than with two hands or two feet to be thrown into the eternal fire. And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away.

It is better for you to enter life with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into the hell of fire. So let's say there is another person in your neighborhood or at your work or at your church that you are finding just irresistibly attractive and you're spending more and more time with them rather than your spouse and you're preferring their company to that of your spouse.

If this is a game of would you rather, Jesus says, would you rather take the millstone or keep that relationship? Jesus says, take the millstone, be thrown into the sea.

[36 : 00] Be thrown into house sound rather than keep that relationship in your life. it is necessary to the one by whom the temptation comes.

And Jesus says the solution is radical amputation. Sever all contact with the person. If that means transferring to another department at work, that's what you do. If it requires you to change jobs or to move you and your family to another church, do it.

I'll tell you what, I, in almost all cases, strongly discourage people from moving around from church to church. But here's one. If you come to us elders and you say, this is the situation, I'm just irresistibly attracted to this other person in the church and I can't get this person out of my mind or away from them, I think my family has to leave and go to another church.

We'll be like, bless you, go. Do it. Go and do it. If this requires that you move your family out of your neighborhood, if this requires that you move you and your family out of any cost.

In the case of pornography, this means that there may be certain apps on your phone you are going to have to delete. I don't care how useful you find that app, delete it. If there are certain times the day you have to give up your phone, do it.

[37 : 24] You can't use your phone at that time of day. You can't use a computer at that time of day. Maybe you'll have to give up phones and computers and general. Go back to the dark ages with a flip phone.

Do it! You have to radically amputate any recurring temptation to sexual sin. You cannot play chicken with a dump truck.

You can't dabble with this monster. do it. You can't do it. You can't do it. You can't do it.

I don't care if your friend is fine with a smartphone. You can't have it. You make war against sexual sin.

You do that by forming a battle plan. Third and finally, not only do you study the enemy, you form a battle plan, but third and finally, we make war against sexual sin by doing battle together. You don't do it on your own.

[38 : 26] Soldiers, don't go to war alone. Rambo is not real life. You need brothers and sisters in arms. We need to work as a unit.

Oh, what a tragedy. The Western Evangelical Church is where we all think that we can just kind of do our own thing our own way. I don't need my unit. I don't need my team. I don't need my local church family.

I can fight sin on my own. I've got this handled. Yeah, sure. That's exactly what the enemy wants. A Christian who keeps corners of his life or her life secret, keeps corners of their life unrevealed to others in the church, is a soldier who has wandered off on their own, and that soldier is easy pickings for the enemy.

That's why Hebrews 3, verse 13 reads, exhort, that means challenge, encourage, tell the truth, exhort one another every day as long as it is called today, as long as you have that window of opportunity, as long as it is called today, that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

that means you meet regularly with mature fellow believers who know the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth about the temptations you're facing day in and day out regarding sexual sin.

[39 : 53] You let them into your life. You let them tell the truth to you about the evil and the hardening power of sin, and you do it before you lose the opportunity to turn around and to repent.

You do it so that you won't be deceived by the lies that sin is telling you. You need other people to tell you the truth about the forgiveness, about the cleansing that's found in Jesus Christ, about the new life of God's Holy Spirit, about the resources and relationships the Holy Spirit has given you to overcome sin and temptation.

temptation. Make war against sexual sin by studying the enemy, forming a battle plan, doing battle together. That's the first way you combat sexual sin is you make war.

And the other side of the coin is this, you combat sexual sin by making peace, by making peace. Remember what the author of Hebrews said in chapter 12 verse 14?

Don't miss that first phrase, strive for peace with everyone and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. It's not enough just to cut sexual sin out of your life.

[41 : 11] You need to replace it with something else. If you leave a vacuum there, it's just going to come back in again. That void needs to be filled. So we strive to restore every relationship in our lives.

You restore the broken relationships. If you are married, that means first and foremost, do you restore your relationship with your spouse? With your spouse first of all.

Proverbs chapter 5, we read these words. Words spoken to a young man. Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice in the wife of your youth. A lovely dear, a graceful doe, let her breasts fill you at all times with delight, be intoxicated always in her love.

Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman, and embrace the bosom of an adulteress? So he's saying, you know how sexual desire is a drug basically?

Intoxicating? He's saying, well, there's one use in which God prescribes recreational drugs, and that's within marriage. Lest you think the Bible is a book of sexual repression, God urges husband and wife to pursue, embrace, enjoy the gift of sex with one another.

[42 : 25] God wants you to enjoy it. This means that spouses, you have to make every effort to love, to cherish, to enjoy one another. Our friend Thomas Watson, he has this to add.

It is not having a wife, but loving a wife that makes a man live chastely. He who loves his wife, whom Solomon calls his fountain, will not go abroad to drink of muddy, poisoned waters.

And then, lest you think that the Puritans were all a stodgy sort, he then says, pure conjugal love is a gift of God and comes from heaven.

And he's almost sounding like a pop song on the radio there. But like the vestal fire, it must be cherished that it go not out.

He who loves not his wife is the likeliest person to embrace the bosom of a stranger. So if you are married, it is not enough to coexist with your spouse. It's not enough to be roommates.

[43 : 32] Making peace doesn't mean merely that there's no conflict or that there's no outward conflict, just stuff simmering under the surface, shoved under the rug. Making peace means your relationship is restored. It's what it should be.

It's restored. It's life-giving. It's exactly what God says it should be. It should be. You need to have that peace with your spouse.

Whether or not you are married, above all, you make peace with God. That's the most important thing of all. And that really is the clincher.

Because if you're not at peace with God, how in the world can you make peace with your spouse? our God has given his only son, he's extended his grace to make peace with you.

He's taken the step. He's taken the initiative. If we make peace with one another, if we confess our sins to God, here is the blessing that we receive.

[44 : 38] 1 John chapter 1. This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you. That God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. We're not really at peace with him. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another.

And the blood of Jesus, his son, cleanses us, purifies us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, hiding it in the darkness, we deceive ourselves.

Notice you don't deceive God. You're not tricking him. It's you you're deceiving. You're in denial. We deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, if we tell the truth, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all, all unrighteousness.

That's the fulfillment of the promise that Jesus made in that beatitude. Blessed are the pure in heart, the cleansed heart. For they will see God.

[46 : 04] They will see God. When we're at peace with God, we begin to see him, to understand him for who he is.

And we don't just see him. The devil sees God and hates him and gets no rest. We don't just see him.

We enjoy him. We find in him there is a far deeper satisfaction than that bowl of stew can ever offer you.

Remember Thomas Watson's words we encountered last week. The reason why persons seek after unchaste sinful pleasures is because they have no better.

They have no better. That's all they've got. That's the best thing in the world they ever have. And once they've got that, there's nothing more. They've received their reward in full.

[47 : 11] So it is. Do not settle for anything less than peace with God. Do not settle for anything less than seeing God face to face.

God's people purify their hearts to experience their all-satisfying God. So we make war against sexually immoral desires, thoughts, and actions. And when we do, we find that that long, hard war, those things that seemed like they were too big a sacrifice to make.

Turns out it was no sacrifice at all. It was worth it. The joy set before us vastly exceeds the pain and the cost.

They're not even worth mentioning. 1 John chapter 3 we read, Oh beloved, we are God's children now.

And what we will be. Has not yet appeared. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him.

[48 : 27] We shall be like him. Because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him, everyone who longs to see him, who longs to be like him, everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure, just like God is pure.

If you're looking for fellow soldiers to fight alongside you in that war against sexual sin, there is help.

There's help available in our church family. So men, first of all, you can talk to any one of our elders, to myself or Carl or Doug. I'm going to volunteer them too. We can help you.

We can help you. We can help direct you to other mature believers, other men who can fight this battle alongside of you. Sometimes in church people talk about sexual sin and temptation as if it's a man's problem only.

That's not true at all. It's a woman's problem as well. So women, we have wise women in our church who can help you. I'm going to volunteer. Susan Badkey, because she volunteered in the past.

[49 : 41] But she's spoken up to me before, someone who can walk alongside you or can direct you towards people who can help you. Don't fight this battle alone.

God did not give you the resources and the strength to fight this alone. He purposely has left you unable to fight this on your own because you need his Holy Spirit and because you need your fellow believers through whom the Holy Spirit is working.

to fight with you. And maybe this is the way that God gives you that oneness that you're longing for that we talked about last week. To join arm in arm.

So that as your fellow believers say, I am with you, you will know that God is with you too. God's people, they purify their hearts because they know they're going to experience their all satisfying God.

That's why they make war against these sexually immoral desires, thoughts, and actions. Because our God is great. Our God is good. Our God is with us.

[50 : 52] Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Oh God, our Father, whom do we have in heaven but you?

And there is nothing on earth worth desiring except you. Our heart, our flesh, they fail. they don't have what it takes.

You are the strength of our hearts. You are that portion, that birthright, that blessing that we long for with us forever and ever.

Oh God, forgive us for trying to fight this alone. We can't fight this alone. Oh God, give us the boldness, the courage to get help, to join up with one another, to make war against the passions of our flesh that are waging war against our own souls, and to make peace with one another and to seek peace at all costs with you.

Oh God, may you show us, give us just a taste of the goodness that you have in store for us so that we can say with full confidence to our friends and our neighbors who are wondering why we are giving up so much.

[52 : 23] May we be able to honestly and truthfully say to them, I'm giving up nothing at all. Because Jesus Christ is worth it. Because he is so good, so lovely, so perfect, that I want to be like him.

Make us people after your own heart, our God. Amen.