

# Repeat Offender

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Date: 12 October 2025

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- [ 0 : 0 0 ] Please take your Bibles and open them up this morning to Genesis chapter 20. But we encourage everybody to have a copy of God's Word open in front of you so that we can see and hear from the pages of Scripture as we walk through this text together.
- So Genesis chapter 20, and when you found it, let's stand in honor of the reading of God's Word this morning. Genesis chapter 20, and when you found it, let's stand in the reading of God's Word.
- Behold, you are a dead man because of the woman whom you have taken, for she is a man's wife. Now Abimelech had not approached her, so he said, Lord, will you kill an innocent people?
- Did he not himself say to me, She is my sister? And she herself said, He is my brother? In the integrity of my heart and the innocence of my hands I have done this. Then God said to him in a dream, Yes, I know that you have done this in the integrity of your heart, and it was I who kept you from sinning against me.
- Therefore, I did not let you touch her. Now then, return the man's wife, for he is a prophet, so that he will pray for you and you shall live. But if you do not return her, know that you shall surely die, you and all who are yours.
- [ 2 : 0 0 ] So Abimelech rose early in the morning and called all his servants and told them all these things. And the men were very much afraid. Then Abimelech called Abraham and said to him, What have you done to us?
- And how have I sinned against you that you have brought on me and my kingdom a great sin? You have done to me things that ought not to be done. And Abimelech said to Abraham, What did you see that you did this thing?
- Abraham said, I did it because I thought there is no fear of God at all in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife. Besides, she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father, though not the daughter of my mother, and she became my wife.
- And when God caused me to wander from my father's house, I said to her, This is the kindness you must do to me. At every place to which we come, say of me, He is my brother.
- Then Abimelech took sheep and oxen and male servants and female servants and gave them to Abraham and returned Sarah, his wife, to him. And Abimelech said, Behold, my land is before you.
- [ 3 : 0 2 ] Dwell where it pleases you. To Sarah he said, Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver. It is a sign of your innocence in the eyes of all who are with you, and before everyone you are vindicated.
- Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelech and also healed his wife and female slaves, so that they bore children. For the Lord had closed all the wombs of the house of Abimelech because of Sarah, Abraham's wife.
- The grass withers and flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever. Father God, we praise you for your word, and we praise you for this story of obvious sin in Abraham's life.

We pray that we would take many lessons from it to apply to our own life. And we praise you for Christ, who is the Savior of sinners. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated.

I wonder if you've ever experienced *deja vu*. Weird feeling that you've been here before, had that same conversation before.

[ 4 : 10 ] It's a strange sensation of things are happening again exactly like they've happened before. You all know I was at the Pillar Conference this week. I've lost count now of how many of those I've been to.

Six, seven, maybe eight. And each year, I can almost guarantee that many of the experiences there are similar, if not exactly the same, year after year after year.

It's always at the same location. It's at Southeastern Seminary there in Wake Forest. The schedule, the order of events is usually roughly the same. I know when to expect the breakouts and when to expect the main sessions.

Even the food is almost exactly the same year after year. I told the guys as we walked in, I said, listen, we're going to have a sandwich. We're going to have Chick-fil-A. We're going to have some barbecue. And lo and behold, that was what the menu held.

Some of the details around the periphery shift here and there. The topic of the conference rotates year after year. It was honey-baked ham sandwiches instead of which-which sandwiches this year.

[ 5 : 14 ] My company was different this year. Bill and Treg joined me this time. But for all intents and purposes, many of the same things happen year after year.

I found myself in a familiar place feeling a sense of *deja vu*. You might have felt a little bit like that this morning as we read this story here in Genesis chapter 20.

And if you did, I want you to know that you are not crazy. We have been here before. We are in familiar territory. Some of the details around this story have shifted.

The location has changed. Some of the characters have changed. But you should notice we have been here before. I want to kind of jog your memory all the way back to Genesis chapter 12.

I realize it's been a while since we've been there, Genesis chapter 12. But see if this story sounds familiar to you at all. Genesis chapter 12 tells the story of Abram and Sarai.

[ 6 : 12 ] Little different names. Abram and Sarai. There's famine in the land. And so Abram and Sarai go down to Egypt. Abram is afraid that the Egyptians will see how beautiful Sarai, his wife, is.

And they'll kill Abram. And so Abram comes up with this brilliant plan. You're going to tell them that you're my sister. Sound familiar? She goes along with it. They take her.

And then they bless Abram with all sorts of goods. But we see the Lord sovereignly. He sees all this happening. He afflicts Pharaoh. And so he sends Sarai back to her husband.

And Sarai and Abram leave wealthier and better off than before. Does that sound familiar to you? Here in Genesis chapter 20, this is essentially the same story.

Details have changed, but we are on familiar ground. And we're right to ask, well, what in the world is going on here? Why are we circling back to this again?

[ 7 : 11 ] You know, there's a proverb that I think helps sum up this story well. Proverbs 26, 11. Anybody know it? Proverbs 26, 11 says this.

Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly. Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.

What we're seeing here in this repeat story in the life of Abraham is a cycling pattern of sin in Abraham's life.

Some of the details have changed, but like a dog returning to his vomit, here Abraham is foolishly repeating his folly. And as we look at this story of repeat sin, I hope that we can admit and be honest that each one of us is prone to do the exact same thing, aren't we?

Sometimes we find ourselves feeling a sense of déjà vu as we wander back to familiar places and familiar patterns of sin in our lives.

[ 8 : 26 ] So let's take a look here. And what we'll see this morning is three lessons about our sin. This will be our outline this morning if you're taking notes. Three lessons about our sin.

First, we see our sin is self-seeking. Our sin is self-seeking. We see this here in verses 1 through 7 of the passage.

Look there with me starting in verse 1. And we see in the aftermath of Sodom, we saw that last week in chapter 19, that we're told that Abraham, he journeyed down toward the territory of the Negev, and he lived there between Kadesh and Shur, and he sojourned in Gerar.

And once again, just as he did in Egypt, he executes this same brilliant plan, doesn't he? Abraham says to Sarai, his wife, says of his wife, she is my sister.

And Abimelech, the king of Gerar, sent and he takes Sarah. Here we go again. But God came to Abimelech in a dream and said to him, Behold, you are a dead man.

[ 9 : 30 ] That sounds more like a nightmare to me, right? God speaks and says, you are a dead man. Why? Because you've taken another man's wife. She's married.

She belongs to somebody else. And you know, this isn't the main point of the passage, but I think it's worth mentioning here. We see very clearly, God takes a high view of marriage, doesn't he? God protects the boundaries of marriage.

God created marriage. God instituted it. It's his design. One man and one woman in covenant relationship for a lifetime. The seventh commandment, the men studied this this week.

The seventh commandment says what? Thou shalt not commit adultery. Now God is protecting the boundaries here of the covenant of marriage. But it's interesting.

Verse 4 says that Abimelech had not yet approached her. He was to this point innocent. He had not yet committed adultery. And so he says to the Lord, Lord, will you indeed kill an innocent people?

[ 10 : 34 ] I've been tricked, God. Did he not say she's my sister? And she herself, does she not say, well, he's my brother? I've done all this in the integrity of my heart, in the innocence of my hands.

I have done this. So the Lord responds, yes, I know that you've done this in the integrity of your heart. Because it was I who kept you from sinning against me. The Lord says that I have not let you touch her.

Now you better return her or there's going to be consequences for you and for your household. Now, I want you to think with me here about the selfishness of Abraham's sin.

How self-seeking Abraham's sin is. It's clear, isn't it? He is not thinking about anybody else in this situation besides himself. His sin is self-seeking.

In fact, his sin is putting everyone else around him in danger. Did you notice that? For one thing, Abraham's sin is putting his wife in danger, isn't he? Abraham's sin is putting his wife Sarah in danger.

[ 11 : 41 ] Just think about this little plan of his. His sin is putting her in harm's way, but he doesn't seem to really care about that, does he? He's just protecting himself two times now.

Sarah's a lot more patient than I would be. Two times now, she has been traded away for his own protection. Two times, she's been given away into another man's hands to be his wife.

This is completely self-seeking behavior, isn't it? And you notice that it harms the person who is closest to him. Do we realize that our sin harms those who are closest to us?

We may think that our sin only hurts us. If anybody, it's only impacting us. But we ought to realize our sin, it also hurts those who are closest to us.

Even so-called secret sins, they harm those who are closest to us. For a married man or a married woman to have a secret affair, that hurts your family.

[ 12 : 55 ] Even a secret pornography addiction, it will impact your relationships. Even internal, invisible sins like selfishness or pride or laziness.

Those often wind up manifesting themselves in external ways that hurt others around us. We need to know our sin impacts those closest to us.

Not only this, but Abraham's sin also puts Abimelech in danger. Abraham doesn't know Abimelech as far as we can tell.

This is their first interaction. They don't have any sort of relationship. This guy is a stranger. But does Abraham's sin impact Abimelech? You better believe so. Absolutely.

He is put at risk of death. It puts his life at risk. And not just him, but also his whole family is at risk because of Abraham's sin.

[ 13 : 52 ] Do we realize that our sin also hurts those around us? A few weeks ago, the northbound lanes on the Ravenel Bridge were shut down.

I don't know what happened. I can only assume a cell phone was involved or a northerner maybe. I'm not sure. One slip up from one driver caused another car or two to crash, which caused the whole side to be shut down, which caused hundreds of other vehicles to be stuck in standstill traffic, including some of you who couldn't make it to where you were attempting to be, which I am certain caused a lot of anger and a lot of hearts, which I am certain overflowed in a lot of words that ought not to be said.

But our sin is often like this. It reverberates. It echoes. You see the chain reaction here.

One little decision now has put one man and his whole family at risk. The impact of our sin is often much wider than we can possibly imagine, which is why we need to understand that sin, first, is a failure to love God, but second is a failure to love neighbor.

How does Jesus sum up the commandments? What's the first greatest commandment, Jesus? Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your mind and all your soul and all your strength.

[ 15 : 19 ] And the second is like it. What is it? Love your neighbor as yourself. Not only this, Abraham here also puts the promise in danger.

Puts the promise in danger. Let's zoom out here just for a minute. You remember the big picture context of what's going on here in the book of Genesis? Do you remember the promise that God has made to Abraham?

God promised Abraham that Isaac would be born to Abraham within the year, specifically from Sarah's womb.

I don't think I have to explain this to you, but if Sarah had gotten pregnant by Abimelech, that promise could not come to pass, could it? Abraham selfishly and protecting himself, he has completely lost sight of the big picture, hasn't he?

In this moment, he acts like he's forgotten God's promises. He's only thinking about himself, not Sarah, not Abimelech, not God.

[ 16 : 31 ] Praise God. What we see here, he does not let our foolishness nullify his faithfulness, does he? Look how God steps in and intervenes.

God makes certain that even despite Abraham's foolishness, his plan, his promises will come to pass. What does he say to Abimelech? Yes, I know you're innocent, but think about why.

I kept you from sinning against her. I know you didn't touch her, Abimelech. Why? I did not let you touch her. Why? God's promises, God's plan to bring about the promised offspring, through Abraham, through Sarah, will come to pass.

You realize our sin is exactly the same. Our sin, it harms those who are close to us. Our sin, it harms our neighbor.

And our sin, ultimately, you know what? It shows a real lack of trust in God and his promises. So we see sin is self-seeking. Not only this, second, second, we see our sin is shameful.

[ 17 : 48 ] Our sin is shameful. And we see this starting in verse 8. There's an irony here in the passage. Did you notice it? This pagan king, Abimelech, who does not know the Lord, he is more righteous than Abraham, the man of faith.

His hands are innocent here, but Abraham is guilty. Do you see the irony here? This pagan king rebukes Abraham, the great father of the Jewish people.

He comes out looking like the bigger, better man in the whole ordeal, while Abraham comes off looking pretty bad, doesn't he? Look there to verse 8. Verse 8 says that Abimelech rose early in the morning.

He responds immediately to the word of God. He called all his servants and told them all these things that the Lord had said. The men were very much afraid. And then Abimelech calls Abraham.

And he says, What have you done to us? How have I sinned against you? Why have you done this? What have you seen here that you're doing this?

[ 18 : 56 ] You've done these things that ought not to be done. Why in the world have you done this? What do you have to say for yourself? Abraham's caught in his lie, isn't he? This pagan king exposes this great father of the faith.

And right here is the opportunity, right? Right here is the chance to say, You're right. I've sinned.

You caught me. I put you in harm's way. I put my wife in harm's way. I've not loved my neighbor as I ought. I've failed to trust in the promises of God.

Forgive me, God. God. That would be the right response, right? But what does he do? Abraham does what you and I so often do.

Abraham begins making all sorts of excuses for his sin, doesn't he? Three of them here. Excuse number one, it's your fault.

[ 19 : 57 ] You don't fear God. I did this because I thought there's no fear of God in this place, and so I better come up with a plan. I thought you were going to kill me.

It's ultimately your fault. If you were more godly, I wouldn't have to sin so much. Excuse number two, here in verse 12.

Boy, you know, I didn't really lie. Technically, she is my sister. Listen to how he just twists himself up in a knot, trying to explain this away.

Well, she's the daughter of my father, though not the daughter of my mother, and then she became my wife. So technically, technically I'm not lying, right? I mean, who's he fooling?

Third excuse here in verse 13. Who does he blame? Ultimately. Ultimately, he says, you know what? It's God's fault. He puts the blame on God.

- [ 20 : 54 ] God made me do it. When God caused me to wander from my father's house, I said to her, this is the kindness you must do for me at every place to which we come.
- Save me. He is my brother. God made me do it. God put me in this impossible situation. What was I supposed to do? I was happy where I was.
- God called me out into this dangerous place. He made me a sojourner. So really, if you think about it, you trace it all back up to the top of the food chain, it's God's fault. Friend, when we wander back into places and patterns of sin, God is not to blame.
- When we fall into sin, it is not God's fault. Yes, we believe in a totally sovereign God.
- We believe that nothing happens apart from the counsel of his will. Amen. Yes, we believe this. And we believe that we are fully responsible for our sin.
- [ 22 : 06 ] God is not to blame for our sin. We should learn from Abraham here. We ought not make excuses for our sin.
- When God brings our sin into the light, that's a grace, by the way. That is a kindness for him to expose our sin, to bring it out into the light so that we can see it as it is.
- When he does that, please, Christian, don't make excuses for your sin. Don't blame others. Don't try to explain it away on some technicality.
- And certainly do not blame God for your sin. Acknowledge your sin and bring it to the feet of Jesus. The word tells us if we confess our sin, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sin and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
- I don't know how Abimelech responded to all of this. I can just imagine he's just standing there nodding like, okay, yeah, buddy, really? That's how you're going to handle this?
- [ 23 : 16 ] Well, he doesn't say a word. Abimelech here, he takes the high road. You see what he does? Abimelech blesses Abraham. He gives these gifts to Sarah, 1,000 pieces of silver.
- You realize that would be about 150 years worth of labor in that day. More than a lifetime. He opens up the land. He gives them full access to the land.
- He clears his name in every way. Abraham prays. God heals Abimelech. And he blesses him. Do you see how backwards all of this is?
- Abimelech comes out looking better than Abraham. He looks more righteous than Abraham. Do you see the issue here?
- Church, it is a shameful thing for pagans to appear more righteous than the people of God. Amen?
- [ 24 : 15 ] Do you understand? It is a shameful thing for non-believers to live a more visibly moral life than the people of God.
- And of course we all sin, church. We all mess up. I'm not saying that we are perfect. We are not perfect, myself especially. But, we are meant to be light in the midst of darkness, aren't we?
- We are called to be holy. As God is holy. We are meant to be distinct. There is meant to be a difference between us and the non-believing world around us.
- And when there isn't any difference, we should recognize something is not right here. This is off. This is shameful. Isn't this what Paul does when he admonishes the Corinthian church?
- He says, it's actually reported that there's sexual immorality among you and of a kind that's not even tolerated amongst pagans. How can this be?
- [ 25 : 22 ] Church, my desire for us is that we would be a holy people. My desire for this church is that we would be distinct.

I don't want our neighbors to say, man, they're just like us over there at Seaweed Bay. They talk like us. They think like us. They cheat. They steal. They lie. They sleep around.

They do all the same things that we do. They value all the same things that we do. No, I want our neighbors to say, man, they are different from us. Something's different over there.

What is that about those people at Seaweed Bay? Oh, they're not prideful or holier than thou. They're not condemning. They're not rude, but there's just, there's a difference there.

They're joyful. They don't seem to need this drink when the clock hits five. They don't have the same apps downloaded on their phones as I do on mine.

[ 26 : 20 ] Sure, they like football, but they don't worship it like I do. If South Carolina happens to lose to LSU, they're mad, but their life goes on. And something's different about these people.

And then guess what, church? We get to answer. It's Jesus. Jesus is alive in me. Christ Jesus has rescued me from slavery to sin.

I'm not better than you. By the grace of God, I've been redeemed. Jesus died and rose again to set me free. Now let me tell you how you can get in on this.

Christ came to bear our sin and our shame, church. He came and he removed the penalty and the guilt and the shame of sin off of us, praise God.

But not only this, Christ also came, Ephesians 5 tells us, Christ also came to present you holy and blameless and above reproach.

[ 27 : 27 ] And above reproach before him. He came to make his people holy. As he is holy. To the praise of his glorious grace.

And the good news for us, church, is that one day, he will finally complete this work in us. Do you believe that? One day, we will be fully and finally holy.

We can hardly imagine it. We will be totally free from sin. Totally clean. Christ purchased the sinless future for us at the cross.

We look backwards and see the atonement and what he's done so we can look forwards with confidence at what will come when he returns. We will be holy. But it's not here yet.

You and I still wrestle in the flesh and wrestle with all sorts of patterns of sin. We're still prone to wonder. We're still prone to walk in ways that dishonor the Lord and harm those around us.

[ 28 : 38 ] We're prone to return back again to our vomit. So in our third point, church, I want to ask, what in the world do we do with this habitual, persistent, stubborn sin in our lives?

How do we handle it? How can we fight it? Because third, we see here, sin is often cyclical. And we could add, sanctification is often slow.

Amen? Now what is sanctification? Sanctification is this process of being made righteous.

We are becoming more like Christ. Abraham was declared righteous by faith. That's justification. And so are we, church.

The moment you put your faith in Christ, you are legally, objectively, formally, officially, truly righteous in the sight of God.

[ 29 : 45 ] No one can take that away. Jesus' righteousness is credited to you by faith. Praise God. sanctification. But sanctification, being made righteous, whoo, that takes some time.

it is painfully slow. A lifetime, in fact. John Owen compares it to a tree. He says, the growth of trees and plants take place so slowly that it's not easily seen.

Daily, we notice little changes. But in the course of time, we see that a great change has taken place. So it is with grace. Sanctification is a progressive, lifelong work.

And we see it here with Abraham. And you realize the first time that this happened was 25 years ago. Here Abraham is, back to the same thing.

Back to the same thing. They were young back then. They were in their 70s. And now he's in his 90s. He's almost 100. And it seems like that righteousness hasn't quite taken root.

[ 30 : 59 ] Sometimes we can find ourselves right back in familiar places, familiar patterns, familiar temptations. So what do we do about this habitual, persistent sin?

I want to finish here by giving you a strategy. Okay? Ten parts. Ten points. I promise. I'll move quickly. Ten of them. First, you must make certain that your sins are forgiven.

This is a starting point. If you are not in Christ, no strategy for fighting sin will help you at all. Do not pass go.

Do not collect \$200. Do not put a strategy in place. Unless your sins have been forgiven by faith in Christ, no strategy for fighting sin will be of any help to you.

You must repent of your sin and come to Christ by faith. That's number one. Make certain your sins are forgiven. Then, and only then, from this position of full forgiveness, full acceptance, how do we grow in holiness?

[ 32 : 08 ] Second, see yourself as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. See yourself as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.

Who are you, Christian? This is Paul's command in Romans 6. We must recognize that we are united to Christ by faith, so much so that Jesus' death is our death, and Jesus' resurrection life is our resurrection life.

That Jesus' victory over sin is our victory over sin. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ.

Number three, speak. And that might sound strange, but you know, you can actually speak out loud when temptation comes. You can speak and say no.

Say no to yourself and your desires. You can speak and say no to the enemy. Tell him no, not today. I'm not going there again. You can speak to your Savior.

[ 33 : 26 ] Lord, would you help me? Would you strengthen me? Would you keep me from evil? God, help me. I'm tempted right now and I'm weak. Would you speak out loud? But of course, in order to speak the truth to yourself and remind yourself of truth, what do you need to do?

Number four, you must saturate your mind with the truth. Saturate your mind with the Word of God. If you just treat God's Word like a reference book, if you just crack it open once or twice a week, if the pages of your Bible still stick together, I'm not sure what to say other than you are neglecting the very means that God has given you to fight sin in your life.

How did Jesus resist the temptation of the devil? What did He do? Three times, He quoted the Word of the Lord. What does the psalmist say?

How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your Word. I have hidden your Word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

You must saturate your mind with the truth. Number five, cultivate spiritual dependence. Spiritual dependence. Walk by the Spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh, Paul says in Galatians 5.

[ 34 : 54 ] Or again, Romans 8, if you live according to the flesh, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. We have to cultivate a posture of spiritual dependence.

You know, Christians are needy people. That's okay. We don't just grit through it and try to be better. We need the Lord.



We need His help. We need the Spirit. Number six, study yourself and strategize. Study yourself and strategize.

You know, if you can memorize the stats on your fantasy football team, you can study your own patterns of your own sin. Pay attention to yourself.

Paul tells Timothy, keep a close watch on yourself and on your hearers. Zoom out and try hard to notice. When do I tend to let my anger get the best of me? What are the circumstances?

[ 35 : 55 ] What are the factors? What's going on when I'm most vulnerable and fall into lust? What am I feeling when I feel like I need that drink? What circumstances are leading up to me bursting out in rage and anger?

What inside of me compels me to boast or to stretch the truth? What are the patterns here? Am I lonely? Am I isolated? Am I afraid? Am I stressed? Maybe I shouldn't drive past the liquor store every day on the way home from work.

Maybe I set some rules and some boundaries around my phone and around my computer. Study yourself. Strategize. Or you can be certain the enemy is studying you.

But you know, as good as that sort of strategizing is, at the root of all sin is something infinitely bigger, which is why, number seven, you must seek real satisfaction in Christ.

Seek to satisfy your heart in the glory of God, in the gospel of Christ. This is the key.

[ 37 : 07 ] If you hear nothing else, this is it. Listen. this is the key to conquering repeat sin in your life. You do it. You go back there because you think it's satisfying.

You do it because you enjoy it. Be honest. The only way to really change this is to truly begin to develop in your heart a deeper and greater love for Christ.

John Piper says, I know of no other way to triumph over sin long term than to gain a distaste for it because of a superior satisfaction in God.

Thomas Chalmers, he calls this the expulsive power of a new affection. You get that image in your mind? That new love, that superior satisfaction in God.

It launches the old satisfaction out. It's expelled from your heart. Cultivate a love for the glory of God.

[ 38 : 13 ] Church, I go back to the Pillar Conference every year because I love it. And we go back to our vomit because we love it.

Do you actually believe that the glory of God is better and more satisfying for your soul than all the pleasures of the world? Psalm 16:11 would be a good verse for you to memorize.

You make known to me the path of life in your presence. There is fullness of joy. At your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Satisfy your heart in Christ.

Number eight, surround yourself with others. Now this is why we need a church family. You are not meant to be isolated.

There are no lone ranger cowboy Christians. If you are isolated, guess what? You become easy prey for the enemy who prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour.

[ 39 : 18 ] Who's he going to go after? The one with the herd or the straggler off on his own? You need others in your life in such a way that they can help you and pray for you and walk with you and encourage you.

God's mechanism for this is the local church. Number nine, strap up. Get ready for a fight.

Two things are true at this very same time here. Sanctification ultimately is God's work. He is the one who brings victory over sin. It's his work.

He's the one who brings his people to holiness. Only he can give you a love for him and for his word in such a way that it overpowers your natural love for sin.

That is God's work. It is God who works in you to will and to work for his good pleasure. That's true. And it's true. You must pursue holiness.

[ 40 : 26 ] Some seem to think that holiness doesn't require any effort. Well, then why in the world does the Bible command us over and over and over again? Put to death, therefore, what is earthly in you, Paul says in Colossians 3.

Do not let sin, therefore, reign in your mortal bodies, he says in Romans 6. Don't let it. You fight it. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourself to God as those who have been brought from death to life and present your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

The Bible seems to think that we ought to do something about this. put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

You will not just happen to stumble into holiness by accident. It must be pursued by the grace of God and in the power of God.

J.C. Ryle says it like this. He says, In justification, the word to be addressed to man is belief. Only believe in sanctification.

[ 41 : 40 ] The word must be watch, pray, and fight. Strap up, finally. Number ten. Here's where we close, church. Set your hope fully on Christ Jesus, our Lord.

Set your hope fully on Jesus. Jesus. The fact is, Christian, this may or may not be encouraging to you, I don't know. The fact is, you will wrestle with sin until the day you die.

We will not fully be freed from the presence of sin until glory, until the Lord returns, or we go to be with Him. I know that may not sound too encouraging, but it's true. You will wrestle, you will struggle, you will fight, and you will grow.

You will have some victories, and you will have some defeats. You might find yourself back in that same familiar place, maybe some details are different here and there, but right back in that same old cycle.

Church, remember Paul in Romans chapter seven? I'm so glad this chapter is in my Bible. Romans chapter seven, don't you love this chapter?

[ 42 : 56 ] Paul, the apostle, champion missionary, hero of the early church, he says, I don't understand my own actions.

I don't do what I want, I do what I hate. Can you relate to that? He goes on, he says, I know nothing good dwells in me that is in my flesh.

I have this desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. I do not do the good that I want. Instead, I do the evil that I do not want.

That's what I keep on doing. Wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from this body of death? Who will save us from our patterns of sin? Who will finally rescue us and put an end to this lifelong battle and wrestling with sin and darkness and the weakness of our own flesh?

Who can do it? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Christ alone has done it.

[ 44 : 06 ] Christ alone is the hope for sinners. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Jesus has come to defeat the powers of sin and darkness for all who know Him by faith. And though we wrestle with the presence of sin in our life, yet we look to Him.

We look to the power of the cross. We look to His return to the day when He will finally put an end to sin, death, and the devil and we will be holy as He is holy.

Church, put your hope fully in Christ and know that God's grace towards you in Him is greater than all your sin.

Father God, we confess, Lord, each one of us is so prone to wonder. We are prone to pursue the sins of the flesh and the desires of the flesh and to wind back up again in familiar places, familiar patterns of sin.

[ 45 : 14 ] Lord, we ask with Paul who will rescue us from this body of death and we praise you with him. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Christ gives us the victory. We praise you for the good news of the gospel, for freedom from sin, for the hope of holiness in the age to come.

We love you. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.