

# Overlooking The Wasteland

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Father, we can't thank for your Holy Spirit that Jesus sent to live in us, who's working in our life, who is sanctifying us, who's making us more and more like Christ. Jason shared us. It's often about self rebattle, Satan battle the world. And yet God was relief by the Holy Spirit. We will be victorious, that we mourn more like Christ.

I just pray that you open our eyes and our hearts to your will for our life, that we be set apart to you to look for your glory. God, you know the things we face in life, the temptations, the sins, and not only deliver us from them, but God, give us strength to overcome them, that Christ's body will be exalted through us. And, Lord, we want to pray for those requests that were given earlier and several dealing with physical issues. And we ask for you to be working in those people's lives and bring healing, bring comfort, bring assurance of salvation.

Lord, so we thank you that we come before you and we pray as Jesus promised. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

Provide us the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. May be seated.

I was going to give an open illustration that is kind of negative when I changed my mind. I couldn't be so positive about that. Okay. And of course, we're excited about Gage, but going off to serve your friendships next week, a young man that said,

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committed to follow the Lord. I read an article this morning that said, more young Mendez.

I got Gen X or Gen Z or one of those gens. I'm not sure which one it is. But more young women are making the decision to follow Christ than young men. And so that is a fundamental change in our society, a fundamental change. And we've been seeing that.

You may know that I like football. And in the last six months or so, there have been three, what I would call genuine revivals that took place at a college that were led by football players. One was at the University of Alabama. They had an impromptu outdoor service. It became thousands.

It was put on by the football players. Thousands of students came, and hundreds of people were baptized as a result of that service. Then two weeks ago, Ohio State, the Ohio State University players decided to have a service late on Friday night, and it was led completely by football players. It looked like, there were 30 or 40 of them on the stage. They led in worship, they shared testimony, and they shared a message.

And thousands of college students responded in that service. Many given their life to Christ and being baptized. And then just a week ago or so, the same thing happened at the University of Arkansas. There's a tendency for us to look around and see all that's going wrong and see how sin is progressing, and it is. But we don't want to overlook the fact that God is at work, that God will always get the victory.

So we pray not just for young Mendez, but for also young women, that they would give their life to Jesus Christ and follow him. So the passage I'm looking at today deals with a topic that all of us struggle with, and I believe especially young men struggle with, and that is the topic of sexual immorality. We've already seen that. Paul has urged us to live a life that pleases God. That's why we're here.

When we come to Christ, the goal of our life should be, how can I live in a way that pleases the God who saved me, who's prepared a place for me to spend eternity with him? How can I glorify and please him with my life? Verse three tells us back in chapter

four, what are the ways that we can do that? He says, for this is the will of God. And our ears ought to perk up when we hear something like, this is the will of God.

How many of us have asked, what's the will of God for my life? One of the most popular questions that people ask, how do I know the will of God? Well, he tells us what the will of God is, right here. This is the will of God. Your sanctification.

Your sanctification. The Niv says, it is God's will that you should be sanctified. That word sanctification has the same root as the word holy or saint. Its basic meaning is to be set or belong to. When something is sanctified, it set apart for a purpose.

It belongs to the one who has decided that purpose. In this case, it means that we have been set apart to God for his purposes, because we belong to him. When we receive Christ into our life, we are no longer our own. That's what one corinthians, chapter six, verse 19-20. It sums us up.

What sanctification says, or do you not know, and if you didn't know, you'd no doubt, okay. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. Because this command to be sanctified is so important. Paul gives us three steps that we can follow in this passage that help us to come to that place where we are sanctified, where we becoming and sanctified.

It's more and more, it's something that goes on as long as you're in this flesh, that you grow in holiness, that you become more and more like Christ adjacent mentioned. That's the goal. When we see him, we will be like him. And we can't just wait until that day. We are to be growing in our sanctification.

And it's a work of the Holy Spirit in you. And Sunday school, especially in chapter five of romans, grace reigns in your life and produce life, and it reigns by the Holy Spirit. He's doing that work. If you're a Christian, but you and I have a responsibility to work it out. We can't just sit and say, okay, God, I'm waiting.

Go ahead and do your work if you can. We have responsibility to work it out in our lives. It doesn't happen automatically. And that's why Paul says, I gave you instructions on how you should live. And we know instructions are important, don't we? Especially us guys. You know, we take the instructions and throw them. Now let's see if we can fix that. And fix that. What's going on?

The instructions. Oh, that's the way you do it. This little doo wiki's got to go in there before that new wacky does. In the same way, God gives us instructions through his holy word on how we should live, so that we can please. So we're going to look at just three steps here.

The first step that Paul gives is in verse three.

He says, for this is the will of God, your sanctification. And then you see, depending on your translation, you see the word that, that you abstain from sexual immorality. And I wish I picked this up in English, 101 or 102. All of a sudden, it dawned on me. There's a word there that's explaining what he just said, how to do it.

That. How do you do it? That. And the first act is that you abstain from sexual immorality. I think before we look at this, we have to ask, why in the world was Pauldin bring up sexual immorality?

Why didn't he say, abstain from murder or abstain from lying for cheating or any of the other commandments? Why did he pick out this one sin? Sexual immorality well, first of all, sexual immorality was rampant in the greek world. It was promoted, it was a part of life. You were expected to be sexually immoral.

Yeah, you had a wife, but she was just so you could have some children. She wasn't there to meet your sexual needs. And so they had to deal with that, just like we have to deal with it today. We have to admit we live in a sexualized culture, and the pressure is there all of the time. Give in to our sexual urges.

That word for sexual immorality is *porneia*, which means any unlawful sexual activity, any unlawful sexual activity, not based on the law of our land, but based on the law of God. And God is the one who appears for law, who determines, this is right, this is wrong. So this includes adultery, which is having sex with someone that is married that you're not married to. It includes fornication, being having sex before marriage, and it includes homosexuality, having sex with the same sex. And again, these were common practices in Greece, in pessimistic all over the world, the roman empire at that time.

And of course, there are common practices today. And basically God is saying, don't. Don't do it. Second of all, it's important because the fact is we were all sexual beings. That is a part of our nature.

God created it in us. And when it's used lawfully in a way that God intended, it's a beautiful thing. But Satan wants to take God's law and overturn it, and he wants to harm us by taking something that was good and turning into something that is bad. Ted knows this, so he's constantly tempting us with sexual sin. The illustration I was going to use at the start of the service, the negative, was about a pastor, although under his name he was mentioned last week, he's in the news.

Someone that I have actually listened to twice at different conferences, someone has looked up to, fell into sexual sin, and he is no longer qualified to be in the ministry. And on the surface, you go, how in the world did that happen to someone who loved the Lord so much? And he does. And yet we need to be aware that we are all susceptible, that he's constantly tempting us in a sexual sense. That's why he says, you have to abstain.

You have to abstain. You abstain when you refuse to take something that's offered to you. Here, you want this? Nope. I abstained.

I was reminded of one of the stories in my book of a time at a potluck, and I was standing alive and I was putting food in my plate. And I came to a pot that looked like a flower pot. It looked like it was full of dirt. And I turned to the lady next to me and I said, what's a flower pot doing on the potluck table? And she goes, that's not a flower

pot.

That's buying a dirt salad. What? Jell o cookies. It's really good. You should try some.

So I turned to the little girl behind me, Amber. And I said, amber, I. There's some dirt salt here. He wants some. Ew.

I ate dirt once, and I didn't like it. I don't want it. She had stained. And you and I need to realize that that is our responsibility. No one can force you into sexual immorality.

And if you're a Christian, you have the power of the Holy Spirit to say, no, I know that is not good for me. I don't want it. And so he says, we have to abstain from that. I came up with a little poem. I don't know if it's original or not, but send a sweet, a real treat.

Try something, you'll feel me.

Best way in the world. Good, doesn't it? It looks good. And, boy, people seem to be enjoying it. But that we need to remind ourselves that Satan is a liar and the truth is not in him and his goal is to destroy our lives.

Let's take something good and turn it into something that will harm us. And you and I have a responsibility to say no. I have seen. I don't want that in my life. And we're seeing more and more young people who are learning the truth of that.

The second step that Paul gives us in regarding to our sanctification is in verse four to five. He says that. That each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passionate lust like the gentiles, who do not know God. I have to mention that translators don't agree on what this passage means on how it should be translated. And they basically come up with three different ways that it should be translated.

The first one, they say it means, you should know how to live with your wives or your husbands in holiness and honor. You should know how to have that right relationship with your spouse. And that's true. And it can be translated that way. The second

translation says, you should know how to acquire a wife, how to find someone that you can spend your life with, that you can devote yourself to, who will help protect you from these sexual sins, sexual immorality.

And then the last many say it means that you should learn how to control your sexual desires, and it actually mentions the sexual organ, that you should learn how to control that desire that you have regardless, sex. All three of these are true, and the idea behind all three of them is the word control. You have the responsibility with the Holy Spirit in you to control those sex urges in one of those three ways. I actually kind of like the second one. I don't think that's the real translation.

But we see today that so many young men are not even thinking about marriage, and yet they have these sexual desires, and then they're surprised when they fulfill them in ways that are not holy. And God intended us, unless you've been called, like Paul, to gift us singleness. So you go out and preach to God the gospel. He's intended us to have a husband or wife, to procreate, to pass on our faith to our children. Paul addresses this issue back in first corinthians, chapter seven, verse 36.

He says, if anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his tribe, the lady that he's engaged to be married, if his passions are strong and it has to be, let him do as he wishes, let them marry. It is no sin. And that is a protection in this sexualized world that we're living today when we're committed to our spouse and protect us from sexual sins. And I think many christians are falling into sexual sin because they are not interested in marriage and they're playing the games and they're having fun and doing this, but they have no desire to spend their life with a christian partner. And again, I read the article that said more and more young men are turning to Christ in he than women are.

Well, guess what? If they're following Christ, they will probably marry a young woman, and they will lead that young woman and her family to draw near to Christ, and they will probably take them and their kids to church. If you want to reach a society for Christ, reach the men. I believe it's a work that God is doing today. It's a great thing because this goes the man, so often goes the family, not guaranteed that you're going

to see it a lot more and the other way around.

So that's the second thing that we know how to let each one of you know how to control his own body of holiness and honor. The third step Paul gives us in verse six, he says that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger. And all these things, as we told you beforehand, and solemnly warn you. If we decide that we're not going to follow this command to abstain from sexual immorality, we need to be aware that God avenges sin. He doesn't overlook it and say, oh, well, it's just natural.

Everybody's doing it. They can help themselves. No, except he will avenge that sin. Whenever we have sex outside of marriage, we're not only sinning against someone else, we're not only sinning against ourselves, but we are sinning against God. When we do that, we put ourselves in a place of judgment in one way or another, and we also put our partner in that place of judgment.

One of the greatest examples of this was King David. We all know the story of Bathsheba. He was taking a bath and he saw her and come on up here. And of course, they were involved in sexual immorality. And of course, she got pregnant.

And as a result of that, David came under judgment. When Nathan the prophet came to him and exposed the sin, he said in psalm 51, against you, you only, have I sinned and done evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. And the judgment came even though he was forgiven and restored. That judgment came because ultimately, all sin is against God. Because he's a holy God.

He has to judge sin. You cannot do anything else. Again, it says in Thessalonians, God is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. And if we would remind ourselves of that fact, if we remember if the consequences of sexual sin, I believe we do anything and everything possible to take these three. To abstain from sexual immorality, we have to be convinced in our mind that it will lead to destruction.



And we see that all the time, even in christian life. And it doesn't mean that God can't forgive, that God can't restore, but there are consequences to sin. So with that in mind, number one, make up your mind ahead of time to abstain from sexual sin. Someone commented, it's a lot easier to deal with these things when they're little than when they're big. And so often we fall into sin because we have not even thought about what am I going to do when that happens?

And we need to make up our mind ahead of time. I don't care what happens. I'm going to abstain. Second, learn how to control your sexual desires. And with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can do that.

Part of that is not putting yourself in a place where you're exposed to things that will cause you to sin. They're powerful, they're strong. And we start out by controlling that and not letting it become a part of our life. And then third, make a commitment not to harm yourself or your christian brother. In that manner, you can be sure, as he solemnly warns us, that God is the adventure.

He says that these things referring specifically to sexual immorality, we're seeing that in our society, our culture, and our church as sad because God has more of us. I want to give a close with an Old Testament illustration that I think underscores how important it is that we follow this command. And it's back in numbers. Chapter 25, verse one to five. Now, I know that many of you, when you start to read through your bible, you got the numbers and you quit.

What's this all about? Who cares how many? We're in the tribe of Judah or the tribe of Levi, or on and on and on. We've got to get to that part of the chapter to get into the good stuff. Okay?

So wade through that. And when you get to chapters 25 one, we see Israel just on the verge of going into the promised land. They've been in the desert for 40 years and had been a life of deprivation, a hard life. And finally, they're getting ready to go into the promised land, and they run into temptation. Verse one.

While Israel lived in Shatim, the people began to whore with the daughters of Moab. These invited the people to the sacrifice of their gods. And the people they did bowed down to their gods. And back then, one of the ways that pagan religions celebrated there was indulging your sexual appetite. And they would drink, get drunk, and then there would be this revelry where they would give in to their sexual appetite.

So in verse three, it said, so Israel yoked himself to Baal at the. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel. And the Lord said to Moses, take all the chiefs of the people and hang them in the sun before the Lord, that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel. And Moses said to the judges of Israel, each of you kill those of his men who have yoked themselves. And it gives us a clue why sexual immorality is so wrong.

When you're involved in sexual immorality, you have yoked yourself someone. You become one with someone who is not your wife or your husband. And God warns us that. And the spiritual application is, we have given ourselves to God in Christ, and we became one with him. And if we get involved in sin, then we have yoked ourselves to something besides him.

And it says, the anger of the Lord burned against that. And the result of that in verse nine. Nevertheless, those who die by the plague were 24,000. Think of that. That's the population of everything.

And because these people, ready to enter the promised land, the blessings that God had proposed them, decided to take a shortcut after the Veda of Peor.

What happens to Eor stays in peor. It doesn't work that way. Because a part of us, as a result of that, it brought destruction not just to themselves, but to the families and the people in their society. And they missed out on earlier verse, back in chapter 23, verse 28, when Balak had brought Balaam, put a curse on Israel, and that wasn't working.

Balaam kept blessing Israel. It says in verse 28. So balaam, balik of balaam, to the top of the. That's where these people have gotten involved in the sexual immorality and worship. And it says, which overlooks the desert.

Some translations overlooks the wilderness. And I can just see these men who have been living in austerity for 40 years and thinking, finally have a little fun with some of those moabite babies walking up the mountain of their hand in hand. This is going to be great. And when they finally get there, they find out it overlooks a wasteland.

And we need to be aware that if we're going to break God's laws to fulfill our human desires, it overlooks a wasteland to people's lives. We need to make that commitment. I'm not going there. Well, God says God has something better planned for me. And when we make that decision, to abstain, to control, not to harm others, I believe the Holy Spirit is free to protect us in the midst of a society that is trying to push us into the hater that will destroy us and those we love.

Thank God that he reveals the truth to you. And I thank God that he gives his holy spirit to us so we have the power to live out that truth in our lives. Thank God that we can live in a way that impacts other people. Thank God that if we fall into that sin, that we can confess a sin, forgive the sin, and also to cut us from all righteousness. And we start today, yesterday, or last year, or 30 years ago.

But today we make a command to stay faithful to our God who loved us. That's very important.

Father, again, I thank you for your word. Thank you that it reveals not just your heart for us, but your ways. We thank you for the instructions that are in. I just pray for each one of us here. I especially pray for the young men and for the young women that we take this to heart and we make that commitment to go your way.

And it is a hard way. It's not the easy way to God. It's a good way. It's a way that brings joy in the first. Protect us and give us a strength to say thankful to Jesus Christ.

Amen.