



Sexual Sin

SEXUAL SIN AND PERSONAL HOLINESS

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(1 Thessalonians 4:5)

A trip to the grocery store on any given day will reveal the blatant sexual messages that infiltrate modern culture. The checkout line is a tunnel of sexual stimuli by way of magazine images and headlines. In every corner of the everyday experience unholy sexual messages abound.

Sexual sin is not a new problem. Long before the "free love" climate of the modern world, the New Testament recorded incest, adultery, homosexuality, lust, and perversions of every kind throughout the cities of the Roman Empire where Paul established churches. God calls Christians to a vision of healthy sexuality that is experienced only in the sanctity of the marriage union.

FORMS OF SEXUAL SIN

The forms of sexual sin and perversion are as varied as the depraved human mind can fathom. The Bible talks about "lust," which is a generic term encompassing many variations of the desire to gratify sexual needs in purely physical ways outside the spiritual and emotional commitment of marriage.

The sin of adultery is one example. King David's sin with Bathsheba illustrates the incredible damage adultery causes to the people involved, as well as to their marriages and their families (2 Sam. 11, 12). Homosexuality is another example. While today it is often deemed unacceptable to view same-sex encounters as sinful or perverted, the Bible's position is clear: Homosexual behavior is sin (1 Cor. 6:9). Other common sexual perversions in society include exhibitionism, voyeurism, cross-dressing, or some kind of sexual fetish. Sexual abuse, especially of children, is another perversion that is profoundly

damaging. Almost always, professional help is required when someone is dealing with the web of sexual abuse or some similarly serious perversion.

However, the problem Christian helpers are most likely to encounter is pornography. Many leading Christian counselors and clergy consider pornography to be the number one social problem today. The Internet has conveniently introduced an incredible array of perverted, yet compelling pornography. More sexually oriented sites are launched on the Internet than any other kind.

UNDERLYING CAUSES OF SEXUAL SIN

Most sexually sinful or perverted behavior is not coincidental or impulsive. Frequently, it is a symptom of deeper issues. One of the underlying issues is loneliness—a disconnection of intimate relationships. Perhaps a marital relationship has gone stale, or the partners never learned to communicate in the first place. Or maybe a single individual feels isolated and unimportant. Some inappropriate behavior is the result of trauma, especially childhood abuse or abandonment.

Another underlying cause behind sexual sin may be the seduction of the culture. Our sexually saturated society gives the message that everyone is having promiscuous sex.

SOLUTION

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SOLUTIONS TO SEXUAL SIN

How can one best help someone who is struggling in this area? A foundational principle is to approach the sexual sinner with grace rather than with judgment. There is no difference in God's sight: Everyone is sinful (Rom. 3:22, 23). Sexual sin and perversion must be addressed in the spiritual arena. The sinner must first be willing to admit and confess the sin. The model of David's haunting confession of his sin, written in Psalm 51, can be helpful. Repentance is a crucial spiritual component of healing. The word "repent" means to turn away from the behavior, as illustrated in Jesus' command to the adulterous woman to "go and sin no more" (John 8:11).

Following confession, a person should accept God's forgiveness. Through forgiveness, people are able to enjoy a new sexual start. God has cleansed them and made them "white as snow" (Is. 1:18). Many people embrace the idea of "spiritual virginity," which simply means a rededication to sexual purity.

In the relational realm, healing may need to take place in the context of community—such as Christian counseling and/or Christian mentoring. Other believers who are connected to and supportive of a person can help him or her through the healing process. By being partners in accountability, they can help the person through times of temptation, so that he or she is less likely to return to the same sin. However, if a person is unable to maintain boundaries and repeatedly commits sexual sin, an addiction may be present, which will require professional help.

In a practical sense, the person may need to avoid certain people, places, and activities in order to maintain boundaries against sexual sin. The injunction to "keep your heart" is a good guide (Prov. 4:23). Christians are promised a way of escape

from temptation, which may involve practical tools such as learning to communicate their needs in an appropriate manner and discovering how to develop greater self-control (1 Cor. 10:13).

Paul calls believers to "put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. 4:22, 23). This renewal is built on a new vision that abandons the urge to indulge in sexual sin or perversion. "Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).

When people have a vision of commitment to sexual purity and when they have others to whom they can be accountable, they will be better able to make healthy sexual choices.

FURTHER MEDITATION:

Other passages to study about the issue of sexual sin include:

- > Proverbs 5:1-23; 6:20-7:27
- > John 8:1-11
- > Romans 6:12
- > 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 6:15-20
- > 1 Thessalonians 4:1-7

To Learn More: Turn to the key passage note on sexual sin at 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 on page 1581. See also the personality profile of David and Bathsheba on page 400.

all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. ⁷For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness. ⁸Therefore he who rejects *this* does not reject man, but God, who has also given^a us His Holy Spirit.

A BROTHERLY AND ORDERLY LIFE

⁹But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; ¹⁰and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; ¹¹that you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you,

¹²that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and *that* you may lack nothing.

THE COMFORT OF CHRIST'S COMING

¹³But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.^a

¹⁵For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until

^{4:8} ^aNU-Text reads *who also gives*. ^{4:14} ^aOr *those who through Jesus sleep*

KEY PASSAGE



Sexual Sin

FOR OUR OWN GOOD

(4:3-7)

The Bible is very clear about sexual sin. God created sex as a beautiful expression of love in marriage. Satan took that beauty and distorted it. Sexual sin encompasses a wide range of activities forbidden by God. No matter what society allows, believers must look to God for instruction in this serious matter. Christians need to avoid activities or thoughts that warp what God intended for building oneness in marriage. The Bible's statements concerning sexual sins are plentiful and plain:

- > *Adultery* (Ex. 20:14; Lev. 18:20; Prov. 6:32; Matt. 5:27, 28)
- > *Homosexuality* (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26, 27; 1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10)
- > *Incest* (Lev. 18:6-18; 20:11, 12, 17; Deut. 27:20, 22, 23)
- > *Bestiality* (Ex. 22:19; Lev. 18:23; 20:15, 16; Deut. 27:21)
- > *Lust* (Matt. 5:28; Rom. 13:13; 1 Thess. 4:5; James 1:14, 15; 1 Pet. 4:3)

Believers must have no part in sexual sin. God knows its power to destroy people. His commands are for our good.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about sexual sin on pages 1582, 1583. See also the personality profile of David and Bathsheba on page 400.

SOUL NOTE



Vessels of Honor (4:4) The words "each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor" refer to believers having sexual self-control. The standards of the Roman Empire were not much different from a lot of the world today: Sex was a form of entertainment; sexual activity between the unmarried was considered normal; even homosexuality was often accepted. But the Bible teaches sexual integrity. Sex is meant only for a husband and wife in the loving bonds of marriage. As believers we should uphold the beauty of sexual integrity, starting in our own lives. **Topic: Sexual Integrity**

things concerning the war, ¹⁹and charged the messenger, saying, "When you have finished telling the matters of the war to the king, ²⁰if it happens that the king's wrath rises, and he says to you: 'Why did you approach so near to the city when you fought? Did you not know that they would shoot from the wall?' ²¹Who struck Abimelech the son of Jerubbesheth? Was it not a woman who cast a piece of a millstone on him from the wall, so that he died in Thebez? Why did you go near the wall?'— then you shall say, 'Your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also.'"

²²So the messenger went, and came and told David all that Joab had sent by him. ²³And the messenger said to David, "Surely the men prevailed against us and came out to

us in the field; then we drove them back as far as the entrance of the gate. ²⁴The archers shot from the wall at your servants; and *some* of the king's servants are dead, and your servant Uriah the Hittite is dead also."

²⁵Then David said to the messenger, "Thus you shall say to Joab: 'Do not let this thing displease you, for the sword devours one as well as another. Strengthen your attack against the city, and overthrow it.' So encourage him."

²⁶When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband. ²⁷And when her mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But

11:21 ^aSame as *Jerubbaal* (Gideon), Judges 6:32ff

PERSONALITY PROFILE



Sexual Sin

DAVID AND BATHSHEBA— COSTLY COVER-UP

(2 SAMUEL 11)

King David enjoyed the perks that come with power. His privileges included multiple wives and concubines. Although sexual satisfaction was always available, it did not insulate David from sexual temptation. Boredom and wandering attention made the king vulnerable. While casually viewing Jerusalem from his high palace porch one evening, David noticed a beautiful woman bathing.

The accidental glance became a fantasy. The fantasy evolved into fact-finding. David discovered the woman was Bathsheba, the wife of one of his military leaders. He summoned her to the palace and took sexual advantage of her. She later notified David that she was pregnant. Sinful decisions continued to escalate in damage, and they widened the group involved.

After a failed attempt to trick Uriah into sleeping with his wife so he would think he had caused Bathsheba's pregnancy, David took more desperate and deceitful actions. He ordered his general Joab to place Uriah in an exposed battle situation where he would almost surely be killed. This led to Uriah's death and David's attempt to cover up the sexual situation by a hasty marriage to Bathsheba.

Fortunately for David, God didn't give up on him, nor did the prophet Nathan. Deep in sin and denial, David needed a fearless friend with the wisdom to lance a cancerous boil of guilt. When Nathan did that (2 Sam. 12:1–15), David repented. Although the repentance was genuine, the consequences were costly. The baby David and Bathsheba conceived in sin died shortly after childbirth.

This sordid episode in David's life reveals the power of temptation and the destructiveness of sin. Sexual sin often leads to lies, cover-up, and deception that only further complicate the lives of those involved. The most destructive cover-ups are the ones that seem to work. They leave sin free to create a havoc of guilt and shame behind the scenes. Though repentance may be costly, it eventually yields better results than hidden and unconfessed sin.

To Learn More: Turn to the article about sexual sin on pages 1582, 1583. See also the key passage note at 1 Thessalonians 4:3–7 on page 1581.

"Lest he also die like his brothers." And Tamar went and dwelt in her father's house.

¹²Now in the process of time the daughter of Shua, Judah's wife, died; and Judah was comforted, and went up to his sheepshearers at Timnah, he and his friend Hirah the Adullamite. ¹³And it was told Tamar, saying, "Look, your father-in-law is going up to Timnah to shear his sheep." ¹⁴So she took off her widow's garments, covered herself with a veil and wrapped herself, and sat in an open place which was on the way to Timnah; for she saw that Shelah was grown, and she was not given to him as a wife. ¹⁵When Judah saw her, he thought she was a harlot, because she had covered her face. ¹⁶Then he turned to her by the way, and said, "Please let me come in to you"; for he did not know that she was his daughter-in-law.

So she said, "What will you give me, that you may come in to me?"

¹⁷And he said, "I will send a young goat from the flock."

So she said, "Will you give me a pledge till you send it?"

¹⁸Then he said, "What pledge shall I give you?"

So she said, "Your signet and cord, and your staff that is in your hand." Then he gave them to her, and went in to her, and she conceived by him. ¹⁹So she arose and went away, and laid aside her veil and put on the garments of her widowhood.

²⁰And Judah sent the young goat by the hand of his friend the Adullamite, to receive his pledge from the woman's hand, but he did not find her. ²¹Then he asked the men of that place, saying, "Where is the harlot who was openly by the roadside?"

And they said, "There was no harlot in this place."

²²So he returned to Judah and said, "I can-

not find her. Also, the men of the place said there was no harlot in this place."

²³Then Judah said, "Let her take them for herself, lest we be shamed; for I sent this young goat and you have not found her."

²⁴And it came to pass, about three months after, that Judah was told, saying, "Tamar your daughter-in-law has played the harlot; furthermore she is with child by harlotry."

So Judah said, "Bring her out and let her be burned!"

²⁵When she was brought out, she sent to her father-in-law, saying, "By the man to whom these belong, I am with child." And she said, "Please determine whose these are—the signet and cord, and staff."

²⁶So Judah acknowledged them and said, "She has been more righteous than I, because I did not give her to Shelah my son." And he never knew her again.

²⁷Now it came to pass, at the time for giving birth, that behold, twins were in her womb.

²⁸And so it was, when she was giving birth, that the one put out his hand; and the midwife took a scarlet thread and bound it on his hand, saying, "This one came out first."

²⁹Then it happened, as he drew back his hand, that his brother came out unexpectedly; and she said, "How did you break through? This breach be upon you!" Therefore his name was called Perez.^a ³⁰Afterward his brother came out who had the scarlet thread on his hand. And his name was called Zerah.

JOSEPH A SLAVE IN EGYPT

39 Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. ²The LORD was with Jo-

^{38:29} ^aLiterally *Breach* or *Breakthrough*

SOUL NOTE



Can't Hide It (38:16) Sexual sin, even when supposedly occurring in secret, has consequences—some immediate, some far-reaching. Tamar had been wronged, and so sought the only way she knew how to right that wrong. Judah propositioned Tamar, thinking her merely a prostitute. This complicated story, based on ancient cultural norms, seems unfamiliar to readers today, but it does reveal the manipulation and exposure that is sure to occur with sexual sin. Some may think that they can hide the sin, but they get caught. And God sees all sin anyway. **Topic: Sexual Sin**

And so shall *Amalek*,^b until he perishes.”

²⁵So Balaam rose and departed and returned to his place; Balak also went his way.

ISRAEL'S HARLOTRY IN MOAB

25 Now Israel remained in Acacia and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. ²They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. ³So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel.

⁴Then the LORD said to Moses, “Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the LORD, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel.”

⁵So Moses said to the judges of Israel, “Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor.”

⁶And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who *were* weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. ⁷Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; ⁸and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel. ⁹And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand.

¹⁰Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ¹¹“Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned back My wrath from the children of Israel, because he was zealous with My zeal among them, so that I

did not consume the children of Israel in My zeal. ¹²Therefore say, ‘Behold, I give to him My covenant of peace; ¹³and it shall be to him and his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood, because he was zealous for his God, and made atonement for the children of Israel.’ ”

¹⁴Now the name of the Israelite who was killed, who was killed with the Midianite woman, was Zimri the son of Salu, a leader of a father's house among the Simeonites. ¹⁵And the name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi the daughter of Zur; he was head of the people of a father's house in Midian.

¹⁶Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: ¹⁷“Harass the Midianites, and attack them; ¹⁸for they harassed you with their schemes by which they seduced you in the matter of Peor and in the matter of Cozbi, the daughter of a leader of Midian, their sister, who was killed in the day of the plague because of Peor.”

THE SECOND CENSUS OF ISRAEL

26 And it came to pass, after the plague, that the LORD spoke to Moses and Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, saying: ²“Take a census of all the congregation of the children of Israel from twenty years old and above, by their fathers' houses, all who are able to go to war in Israel.” ³So Moses and Eleazar the priest spoke with them in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, *across from* Jericho, saying: ⁴“Take a census of the people from twenty years old and above, just as the LORD commanded Moses and the children of Israel who came out of the land of Egypt.”

⁵Reuben was the firstborn of Israel. The children of Reuben were: of Hanoch, the family of

24:24 ^bLiterally *he* or *that one* 25:1 ^aHebrew *Shittim*

SOUL NOTE



Sleeping with the Enemy (25:1) The Israelites' commitment to God was violated by their sexual indulgence with the women of Moab. The Israelite men committed sexual sin with these foreign women, and this led to the men worshipping the foreign gods as well. Sexual sin always progresses, drawing people farther and farther from God. What may start as an “innocent” flirtation with sin can lead to deadly consequences. Dabbling around the edges of sexual sin can take hold and consume a person, leading to pain and brokenness. **Topic: Sexual Sin**

the Hanochites; ⁶of Pallu-ites; of Carmi. ⁷These are the names of the men who were killed, a thousand seven hundred. ⁸And the name of the son of Pallu was Nemuel, the Midianite. ⁹And the name of the son of Dathan and Abiram, who contended against Aaron in the wilderness, was Ovi. ¹⁰And the name of the man who opened his mouth against Moses and Aaron when the children of Israel were gathered together with Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, was the name of the man who was killed, who was killed with the Midianite woman, was Zimri the son of Salu, a leader of a father's house among the Simeonites. ¹¹And the name of the Midianite woman who was killed was Cozbi the daughter of Zur; he was head of the people of a father's house in Midian.

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and you became Mine," says the Lord GOD.

⁹"Then I washed you in water; yes, I thoroughly washed off your blood, and I anointed you with oil. ¹⁰I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk. ¹¹I adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. ¹²And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. ¹³Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth. You ate pastry of fine flour, honey, and oil. You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty. ¹⁴Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you," says the Lord GOD.

JERUSALEM'S HARLOTRY

¹⁵"But you trusted in your own beauty, played the harlot because of your fame, and poured out your harlotry on everyone passing by who would have it. ¹⁶You took some of your garments and adorned multicolored high places for yourself, and played the harlot on

them. *Such* things should not happen, nor be. ¹⁷You have also taken your beautiful jewelry from My gold and My silver, which I had given you, and made for yourself male images and played the harlot with them. ¹⁸You took your embroidered garments and covered them, and you set My oil and My incense before them. ¹⁹Also My food which I gave you—the pastry of fine flour, oil, and honey *which* I fed you—you set it before them as sweet incense; and so it was," says the Lord GOD.

²⁰"Moreover you took your sons and your daughters, whom you bore to Me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. *Were* your acts of harlotry a small matter, ²¹that you have slain My children and offered them up to them by causing them to pass through *the fire*? ²²And in all your abominations and acts of harlotry you did not remember the days of your youth, when you were naked and bare, struggling in your blood.

²³"Then it was so, after all your wickedness—"Woe, woe to you!" says the Lord GOD—²⁴that you also built for yourself a shrine, and made a high place for yourself in every street. ²⁵You built your high places at the head of every road, and made your beauty to be

SOUL NOTE



God the Jilted Groom (16:8-14) This passage about God's love for Jerusalem despite the nation's idolatry pictures God as a jilted groom reminding His bride of all that He has done. If it seems strange to think of God as a scorned lover, it shouldn't. How often do we reject Him to follow our own desires and impulses, only to return later begging for forgiveness? We can find great comfort in the fact that our heavenly Father can empathize with the pain of someone who has been betrayed by a loved one. Knowing that He understands can help us trust Him in our own hurt and pain.

Topic: Adultery

SOUL NOTE



The Beauty Myth (16:15) Though "harlot" refers to Jerusalem, and the "harlotry" to spiritual idolatry, the passage also teaches about trusting in the wrong things. The city trusted in its beauty and fame; so do many people.

Trusting in one's own beauty or sex appeal can lead to all kinds of problems, including sexual sin. Devastated relationships, poor self-image, and life-altering diseases are just a few of the lingering effects of sexual sin. God did not give us rules regarding our sexuality to spoil our fun; He did it to *enhance* our pleasure, to provide a guilt-free, worry-free way to express physical love. **Topic: Sexual Sin**

though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *you do not have* many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. ¹⁶Therefore I urge you, imitate me. ¹⁷For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.

¹⁸Now some are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you. ¹⁹But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power. ²⁰For the kingdom of God *is* not in word but in power. ²¹What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?

IMMORALITY DEFILES THE CHURCH

5 It is actually reported *that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named^a among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife! ²And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. ³For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. ⁴In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁵deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.⁴*

⁶Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.^a ⁸Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven

of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.

IMMORALITY MUST BE JUDGED

9 I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. ¹⁰Yet I certainly *did not mean* with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. ¹¹But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person.

¹²For *what have I to do with judging those also who are outside?* Do you not judge those who are inside? ¹³But those who are outside God judges. Therefore *“put away from yourselves the evil person.”^a*

DO NOT SUE THE BRETHREN

6 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? ²Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? ³Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? ⁴If then you have judgments concerning things pertaining to this life, do you appoint those who are least esteemed by the church to judge? ⁵I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you, not even one, who will be able to judge between his brethren? ⁶But brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers!

5:1 ^aNU-Text omits *named*. 5:5 ^aNU-Text omits *Jesus*. 5:7 ^aNU-Text omits *for us*

5:13 ^aDeuteronomy 17:7; 19:19; 22:21, 24; 24:7

SOUL NOTE



In the World (5:9–11) When Paul urged the Corinthian believers “not to keep company with sexually immoral people,” he was referring not to sinning unbelievers, but to sinning fellow believers. Believers should avoid immoral people who continue in their sin and yet claim to be Christians. Some believers attempt to rationalize sinful behavior, but when they do so they dishonor Christ, who died for their sins. Sexual sin in the church must never be rationalized: Condoning such behavior harms the church’s reputation and damages its witness. **Topic: Sexual Sin**

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you. ¹⁵For

4:3 ^aLiterally

lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw^a are the seven churches.

THE LOVELESS CHURCH

2 "To the angel of the church of Ephesus write,

"These things says He who holds the seven stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the seven golden lampstands: ²"I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; ³and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My

name's sake and have not become weary. ⁴Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. ⁵Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent. ⁶But this you have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate.

⁷"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God."

THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

⁸"And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write,

"These things says the First and the Last, who was dead, and came to life: ⁹"I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich); and I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but *are* a synagogue of Satan. ¹⁰Do not fear any of those

things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw *some* of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

¹¹"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death."

THE COMPROMISING CHURCH

¹²"And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write,

"These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: ¹³"I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did

"Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life."

REVELATION 2:10

not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ¹⁴But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. ¹⁵Thus you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. ¹⁶Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.

¹⁷"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it."

1:20 ^aNU-Text and M-Text omit *which you saw*.

2:15 ^aNU-Text and M-Text read *likewise* for *which thing I hate*.

SOUL NOTE



Heart Search (2:18–23) Sometimes people think they can hide portions of their lives from everyone. They try to hide angry tempers, deep jealousies, or sexual sin. In His message to the church in Thyatira, Christ clearly stated that He "searches the minds and hearts" (2:23). Nothing is hidden from Him. No sexual sin can escape His notice. People may think they are getting away with it, but God knows. Everywhere we go, everything we say, think, or do is seen by God. That understanding alone should help us to steer clear of sexual sin. **Topic: Sexual Sin**