

Session 8 Encountering Jesus: Overcoming Temptation

Please refer to the teaching notes for this message.

INTRODUCTION

Father, we ask You to release understanding of the glory of Your Son. Father, I ask You that I would represent Him well today: that Your word would take effect upon our hearts in a special way, and that Jesus would be magnified in us. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Turn to Revelation 2. I've been talking about the thirty descriptions that Jesus gave of Himself in Revelation chapters 1 to 3. It's a very significant passage of Scripture, Revelation 1 to 3, where Jesus reveals Jesus and highlights thirty specific aspects of His character and His ministry. It's one of the best-kept secrets of the Body of Christ, these three chapters, and I say that with pain in my heart. It needs to be one of the most common passages in the Word of God, because again, Jesus is magnified in His glory.

Now I want to take a few passages from Revelation 2 and talk about overcoming temptation by encountering four specific aspects of Jesus' majesty: the ones that He highlighted that were necessary to overcome temptation as we describe it here in just a moment.

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS PREPARING THE CHURCH TO OPERATE IN GREAT POWER

Paragraph A. The Holy Spirit is preparing the Church to operate in great power. That's what's on His agenda right now, but He requires in that preparation that we have lifestyles that are in agreement with Him and that are pleasing to Him.

THE TWO MAJOR SINS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Now it's significant that the two sins that Jesus focused on the most in the book of Revelation, the two sins that He most emphasized in the Church, were sin and idolatry. And He revealed some aspects of Himself of which He said, "If you understand these things about Me, it will help you to walk in freedom over these two particular sins."

Now idolatry, in the most general sense, is the quest for power outside of the will of God. Immorality is a quest for pleasure outside of the will of God. They speak of those two larger areas of temptation in our life. Now Jesus in Revelation 1, 2, and 3 gives us insight on how to overcome particularly these two sins.

IMMORALITY ENCOMPASSES ALL SEXUALITY ACTIVITY OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE

Paragraph B. Now immorality by definition is all sexual activity outside of the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman. It involves sexual activity in dating and committed relationships. Before the covenant of marriage is publicly made known and proclaimed, there is to be no sexual activity in our lives, except for under the protection and the sacredness of the covenant of marriage. It's sexual activity that's physical, it's sexual activity that's verbal—meaning joking or sexual innuendos that are verbal—and sexual activity related to technology. To all of these the Lord says, "I want to free you from them and I want you to abstain from them."

Now one of the reasons the Lord cares about this subject so much is because He knows that immorality opens doors for darkness in our life. It's a door that can't be open except we open it ourselves. And it grants Satan legal entry to affect our life at various levels. The more we open the door, the more we give Satan permission to harm our lives and our relationship with God.

Paragraph C. Today I want to talk specifically about immorality and not the idolatry part, although that in itself is a very important subject. Because really, idolatry from the New Testament point of view is covetousness. Idolatry is the pursuit of money, gain, and power by interacting with the spirit realm. But that's another subject for another day.

TEACHERS WHO ARE TEACHING A FALSE DOCTRINE OF GRACE

Paragraph C: We will look at two different churches to which Jesus spoke, two churches both in Asia Minor, in what is modern-day Turkey. These two churches are Thyatira and Pergamos. Now they had the same struggle; they had the same strongholds of darkness in their church as a whole, and their leaders tolerated these different activities, particularly idolatry and immorality.

And Jesus says, "I have something very specific to say to you two churches to help liberate you."

Now they were both influenced by false teaching on grace. Now false teaching on grace is one of the most common long-term tactics of the devil: to lie to us about the grace of God. And both of these churches had teachers with recognized ministries that gave false teachings on grace that told them it was OK to be involved in immorality and OK to be involved in idolatry.

Let's read this. Revelation 2:14. Jesus is speaking to the church in Pergamos, and he says, "You have those in your midst, your own teachers, who teach the doctrine of Balaam" (Rev. 2:14, paraphrased). Now what Balaam taught was that it was OK to be involved in idolatry and sexual immorality. Balaam was a false prophet in the Old Testament. You can read about him more in Numbers 22 to 25, but Balaam had this teaching that promoted idolatry and immorality.

And Jesus is saying to the church, "You guys are doing the same thing! Your elders, the leaders in the church, aren't doing anything about it! You're allowing it to go on."

"YOU ALLOW THAT WOMAN JEZEBEL . . . TO TEACH AND SEDUCE MY SERVANTS"

Then He spoke to the church at Thyatira in Revelation 2:20, which was the church just down the way a bit. He says, "I have a few things against you. Like Pergamos, you have the same problem. You allow Jezebel to teach and seduce My own servants"—born-again believers—"to walk in immorality and idolatry" (Rev. 2:20, paraphrased).

Now in Pergamos it was the doctrine of Balaam, and in Thyatira it was the teaching of Jezebel; it's the same lie, just with a different face on it. It's a false teaching of grace that gives people confidence to continue in their compromise and think everything is OK. Whereas the grace of God is to give us confidence to pursue purity in the knowledge that it's attainable, and that the Lord will give us a new beginning every single day that we continue the war against sin in our life. We may stumble in our sin, but we can have confidence in the Lord's pleasure day by day; He gives us a new beginning as we rise up to war against this area. We never make peace with this area of sin.

Well, all throughout church history there have been false teachings of grace, and it's filling the Church today across the world. It has different faces. Today we have the same idea that it's OK to walk in immorality as long as you're in a committed relationship with another person. "Immorality is OK because we're getting married anyway!"

Beloved, it's immorality from the Lord's point of view. Or the guy says, "Well, I'm tired of my wife, so I'm going to trade her in and get a newer model." There hasn't been any immorality, because Jesus says that for the cause of adultery you can be divorced and remarried. "I'm just tired of her and I want to move on and get remarried." That's another face of the false doctrine of grace. That's immorality from the Lord's point of view.

We find it in the Church's acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle, calling it biblical and accepting it into the Church. That's another false doctrine of grace. There are many different faces to compromise, both homosexual and heterosexual. The Lord says, "I want you free from it. I want you to shut the door to darkness in your life, because I have so much that I want to say to you and do through you."

FOUR DESCRIPTIONS OF JESUS THAT COMBAT IMMORALITY AND IDOLATRY

Roman numeral II. I'll give a little overview of the ground I'll be looking at, and we won't cover all of it, because that's what the notes are for, so you can read them on your own if you want. I'm putting these two churches together, because they had the exact same problem of immorality and idolatry. And if you put the two churches together, Jesus highlights four specific descriptions about Himself. There are four facets of His own character or ministry, and He gives them four specific eternal rewards to motivate them. And so it's basically eight truths that Jesus highlights, and He says, "If you'll focus on these eight truths, it will strengthen you and your pursuit to walk in freedom from the temptation of immorality."

Now Jesus is more than a good therapist; He's the wisest Man to ever walk the earth. He's God. He understands the human design, and He says, "If you understand these four facets of Me and you understand these four rewards that I'll give you, they must be in your understanding as you're pursuing a life of liberty and freedom."

Now as I look around the Body of Christ over the years, many different approaches to healing of sexual sin and bondage don't have these eight components in them. They may have some, but we need all the components that Jesus thought were necessary to obtain freedom and liberty.

Paragraph B. Let's look at the four facets of His personality, or His ministry. In Revelation 2:12, He's talking about Himself to the church of Pergamos: "These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword" (Rev. 2:12). He goes on to say, "Repent or I'll use that sword to fight against you" (v. 16, paraphrased). That's an interesting statement that you don't hear much in the Church today. Jesus fighting against the Church, His own people, with His own sword?

CONFIDENCE TO APPROACH THE ONE WHO HAS POWER TO TRANSFORM US

Verse 18. To the church of Thyatira He says, "These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass" (Rev. 2:18). There are various dimensions of how He uses that sword in the Church, and He uses it in a different way in the nations. We'll look at that in a moment.

He calls Himself the Son of God. Well, obviously He's making a point. He says, "I want you to have confidence that I'm God. I have power over immorality. Don't write yourself off as though you've gone too far; you're too broken; you're too in bondage. I'm God. I designed the human spirit. I have power over darkness. And I can forgive any sin you ever commit. My love is bigger than your sin. My wisdom is greater than your bondage. My power is greater than Satan's. My rewards are superior to the temporary pleasures of immorality. In every way I'm superior in what I'm offering you, and I want you to have confidence in that."

That's what He means when He says, "I'm God."

He wants to bolster the confidence in them as they're approaching their liberty and freedom in this area. Then He says, "I have eyes like fire." He says, "I want you to know how I feel and how I see you and how I feel about you." The reason Jesus has eyes of fire is because He has a heart that's filled with fire. He has burning eyes because He has a burning heart for us, and that's a very positive thing. And He says, "I want you to know that I have feet like brass. I will step in with My feet and alter circumstances. I will step in and step on the circumstances that are enabling you and empowering you to continue in immorality. I will intervene with circumstances; you must know that."

Now again, I've only given a whisper, a hint, of these four elements. All four of them must be in our mindset and in our approach in our relationship to Jesus as we're seeking to walk free of temptation in this area.

JESUS PROMISES HIDDEN MANNA AND A WHITE STONE WITH A SECRET NAME

Paragraph C. I describe here the four rewards. Now these rewards are all clarified in the larger testimony of Scripture. What I mean is this: if you read them at first glance you might not get them, but you can be sure that Jesus is speaking about ideas that are developed in the Word of God. I mean He is the Word of God. He is the Living Word, and He's the full expression of the written Word. He says this: "These four motivations are essential to walk in freedom from sexual bondage."

Number one: He promises hidden manna. Number two: He promises a white stone (Rev. 2:17). He promises to engrave your name on it and write things about you. This will be one of your most precious possessions in the age to come, and we'll look at it in a moment.

POWER OVER THE NATIONS AND THE MORNING STAR

Number three: He promises to give you power to rule the nations with Him, because the Father gave Him the nations as His inheritance, but He wants to rule it in partnership with humans, with the people who loved Him in this age (Rev. 2:26). Those people will rule with Him in the age to come. "If you rule your spirit and you rule your flesh," says Jesus, "you will rule the nations with Me in the age to come." There are very positive consequences for restraint because of love.

Number four: He promises the morning star (Rev. 2:28).

Now these eight truths are the ones that Jesus emphasized to empower people to overcome immorality. Again, He is the wisest teacher who ever walked the earth. He knows how it works. Now He gave them just abbreviated statements, but He says, "Search out the Word and it will be clear what I'm saying about each one of these statements."

THE SHARPEST, MOST EFFECTIVE WEAPON AGAINST THE KINGDOM OF DARKNESS

Roman numeral III. Jesus has a sharp sword (Rev. 2:12). Now this sword has two edges because of the double character of God. The Word of God offers salvation if we say yes and judgment if we say no. And nothing can stop the power of the Word of God. It's the sharpest and most effective weapon against the kingdom of darkness. He says in verse 16, "Repent or I'm coming to you quickly. I will break in in circumstances and I will

fight against you with the sword of My Word” (Rev. 2:16, paraphrased). Now He’s talking about Jesus fighting against believers.

What He means is that He’s going to fight against your sinful agendas. “I will stop you. I will first use the Word of God to convict you. I will talk to you consistently about this subject. And I will cause it to bear down on your conscience, everywhere you turn. I will say it to you again and again and again if you’ll listen to Me.” And again, there are various stages of the sword of the Lord in the Bible, but it starts off with the Word of God coming to our heart. If we will listen at that level, we will be spared many other traumas and troubles that will come if we don’t listen to it at that level.

BY THE COMMAND OF HIS MOUTH, THE SWORD OF HIS WORD IS RELEASED

Paragraph B. The sword of His mouth. He calls it “the sword of His mouth.” He means the word of God. That’s how it starts off. It’s the power that’s released by the word of His mouth. Some people imagine Jesus with a sharp, metal sword coming out of His mouth, I’ve seen pictures like that. That’s not how it is. What He means is that by the command of His mouth the sword is released. The angels might use the sword. The Bible is filled with examples where angels draw the sword. As a matter of fact, in the very story of Balaam which was mentioned earlier, the story of the man whose doctrines this church was teaching, the angel drew the sword. Balaam was killed by the sword of the Lord. And the sword of the Lord swept through the camp, and everyone who said yes to immorality was brought under judgment.

You’ll need to go back and read Numbers 22-25 to get the Balaam storyline and how the sword of the Lord has its various stages of involvement. And that’s part of the backdrop of Jesus speaking this. Again, He’s only giving an abbreviated statement, but He says, “Go and read the Scriptures; the whole storyline is clear in the Word.”

HE JUDGES US BY REFUSING TO SPEAK ABOUT EVERYTHING EXCEPT OUR SIN

Paragraph B: He starts with the word of God that’s sharper than a two-edged sword; that’s stage one. And that’s the stage we want to focus on right now. There He speaks to our heart the spirit of conviction. And someone says, “Well that doesn’t sound so bad.”

“Well there are other implications.”

The man is involved in immorality, but he wants to know about other areas. He says, “Lord, I’ve got my business. I’ve got my ministry. I’ve got my family. Yes, I’m entrenched in immorality over here, but I need Your direction in these other areas.”

And the Lord says, “I only have one thing to talk to you about right now—this issue.”

“Ah, but Lord, my money, my ministry.”

“No. I have nothing to say to you right now. My word will resist your sinful agenda in your life and I’m only going to talk about one subject!”

“No, Lord I want to change the subject!”

And the Lord says, “I’ll direct what I talk to you about,” and that’s actually a judgment, and here’s why. It’s like being out in the midst of the sea in a storm without any navigational instruments.

This guy would say, “Lord, I’m like in a storm out in life and I need Your direction!”

And the Lord would say, “I have so much to say to you. I have so much insight about your situation. However I will only speak to you at one level. My word will only talk to you in this way and I’ll be against you. This alone is a judgment against your life: I will not speak to you about other subjects.”

Well again, you can read more about the sword of the Lord and its various stages in the book of Revelation and in Numbers 22-25.

THE ONE WITH EYES LIKE FIRE AND FEET LIKE FINE BRASS

Roman numeral IV. Now, here in Revelation 2:18, He’s talking to the church in Thyatira, and He’s going to talk about the other three descriptions. He’s already talked about the sword of the Lord and the fact that He’s going to release His word. And again, it will increase beyond just the word of God confined to one subject—the relationship God has with him locked into one subject. Again, God has so much more to say, but that’s the subject that He’s going to lock in on.

He says, “Let Me tell you now, I’m the Son of God. I have eyes like fire and feet like brass.” Then He goes on: “You allow the woman Jezebel to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality. Indeed I will cast her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will cast into great tribulation unless they repent. If they repent I will undo the whole thing” (Rev. 2:20-22, paraphrased).

“I WILL KILL HER CHILDREN WITH DEATH”

Then He takes it up a notch. “I will kill her children with death” (Rev. 2:23)—with physical death. “And all the churches will know that I have zeal and that I’ve broken in to those who were flagrant” (v. 23b, paraphrased). They were bold; they were challenging the doctrine of Jesus. They’re saying, “I can live in immorality; you just wait and see, I’m not afraid of the Lord in this because the Lord’s approving of it.”

The Lord says, “I’ll make examples out of you to show you the error that you’re in.” Now He wasn’t talking to people struggling with immorality and who were warring against it. He was talking to people who were bold in their persistence and who were flagrant about it.

THE TROUBLE WITH JEZEBEL

Now it’s interesting that in verse 20, He says, “You allow this woman Jezebel to keep teaching.” Now the Jezebel of the New Testament is different than the Jezebel of the Old Testament. There was a Jezebel who fought against Elijah in 1 Kings 18, 900 years before Christ was born. John is writing this in the first century, so these are two different women. However, this was a woman with a local teaching ministry, a woman who was teaching people this false doctrine of grace.

JESUS WILL CAST THOSE WHO TEACH IMMORALITY INTO GREAT TRIBULATION

And Jesus said, “Here’s what I’ll do. There’s a progression. First, I will make Jezebel sick. Then I will cast those who are involved with her into great tribulation.” That doesn’t mean the tribulation at the end of the age;

it means, “I will create pressures in their lives, great pressures. And if they won’t pay attention then I’ll kill her children.”

Now it’s very popular for people today to say, “Wait! Jesus couldn’t make someone sick or create tribulation or kill children!” Well I want to say this: I’m going with Jesus’ version of Jesus, not the popular version that’s against it. This is Jesus saying what Jesus will do.

Now this is the exception; it’s not the rule of His kingdom. But to the flagrant, to those that are bold and persistent in immorality, He says, “Watch, for I will do this.” Why? “Because I have so much love for these people, I’m going to spare them the far greater disaster of eventually potentially denying their faith. I would rather trouble them with severe mercy to wake them up and to get them to repent, that they would escape a much more severe penalty of denying the Lord.” So that’s what’s going on here.

IF WE WOULD JUDGE OURSELVES, WE WOULD NOT BE JUDGED BY GOD

Paragraph B. 1 Corinthians 11:30. Paul says this: “For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep” (1 Cor. 11:30). He’s talking about breaking bread: they’re taking communion, yet they persist in immorality. He says, “Many of you are emotionally weak. You’re unstable emotionally, and you could be experiencing the grace of God, but there’s been a withholding because the Lord wants to wake you up.” He says, “Others are sick, and still others are asleep.” This doesn’t mean they took a nap. It means they’re dead.

He says, “If you would judge yourself by repenting, you won’t be judged by the Lord” (1 Cor. 11:31, paraphrased).

Someone says, “Well, maybe it’s not the Lord judging them.”

Paul says, “No, it’s the Lord, and I want you to know about it. For when you’re judged this way, you’re being judged by the Lord, but the point is the big picture. He doesn’t want you to end up condemned with the world” (1 Cor. 11:32, paraphrased). “He doesn’t want you in the lake of fire” is the idea.

The Lord says, “I will break in and disturb you, even with premature death.” That’s what was happening: they were dying before their time because He didn’t want them condemned along with the unbelievers in the world.

Now again, this is offensive to some people: they have the idea that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament are somehow different. That’s a complete confusion: the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament is exactly the same God. There’s only one God. He’s filled with love in the Old and filled with love in the New. He has wrath in the Old and wrath in the New because He never changes; it’s the exact same God. And so there’s no idea that He’s mad in the Old and He just lets boys be boys in the New. No, He says, “I’m zealous in love, and I will disrupt you to get your attention so that you don’t end up denying the relationship in the big picture, in the long term.”

IT’S IMPORTANT TO KNOW HOW YOUR BODY RESPONDS IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

Now Paul talks about the Lord’s judgment in a very specific way in 1 Thessalonians 4. He’s talking here about immorality. He says, “It’s important that every person, every individual, understands how to possess his or her vessel in sanctification and honor” (1 Thess. 4:4, paraphrased).

Now the vessel he's talking about is their physical body. Another word for *sanctification* is *purity*, or *holiness*. He says, "It's important to know how your body works with your emotions and in different contexts. You have to know how you're going to respond." It may take you some time to know, but you must learn how your body operates related to all the various circumstances and contexts that you might walk into. The reason you need to know this is because everyone is a little different, and you need to carry your body in sanctification and purity, and you can live with honor before God in your body.

Now look at verse 5. Paul is still talking about immorality. He says, "I don't want you living in the passion of lust, because you're opening a door to darkness in your life and a lot of damage comes in your walk with God" (1 Thess. 4:5, paraphrased). Now there are plenty of people around who will wink at immorality, but it has disastrous impact upon our walk with God and our life as a whole.

Now you can get a bunch of people who give you Bible verses that say it's OK. It's not OK; it's injuring the life of every believer that does this. "Well, we'll get married one of these days!" You can't grieve the Holy Spirit until your wedding day. You want to go into your wedding day strong and mighty in your spirit, not after a year or two of grieving the Spirit walking in sin, because you'll want to start your marriage in the life of God with a vibrant spirit.

"NO ONE SHOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF AND DEFRAUD HIS BROTHER"

Paul goes on in verse 6: "No one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such" (1 Thess. 4:6).

Now what's he talking about? He's talking about immorality again. There are two couples in the Body of Christ, and one man begins to make advances on the other man's wife. They're both in the Body of Christ; they both have a covenant with God, and he begins to make sexual advances. And Paul said, "This is really bad, because the brother who's pursuing sin is defrauding his innocent brother."

Because the innocent brother thinks, "Because we love God and we're under a covenant with God, I don't assume that you will be making advances on my wife." And so he isn't paying attention.

And Paul said, "You're taking advantage of your brother, and the Lord is really upset about this, especially when it's within the family of God." He says, "The Lord will be the avenger of this."

Now again, someone might say, "God doesn't judge this."

And so Paul says in verse 8, "I thought someone might say that. Anyone who rejects this teaching, they're not rejecting man, they're rejecting the God who gives the Holy Spirit" (1 Thess. 4:8). Paul said, "If you don't accept this teaching, that God will avenge on this, even within the Body of Christ, you're not rejecting my opinion, my philosophy as a man; you're rejecting the God who gave the Holy Spirit, because He really cares about this subject."

DELIVER HIM TO SATAN FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE FLESH

Paragraph C. 1 Corinthians 5. Paul said, "It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you" (1 Cor. 5:1). Here's the idea: a man is sexually involved with his stepmother. Dad went out and married a younger

woman, and the son, you know, is a little older, and he says, “Hey Dad, I like the gal! She’s pretty cute!” And so he starts making advances when Dad isn’t around.

Paul says, “This is unthinkable within the covenant community, within the Body of Christ, within the same home.” He says “Here’s what I want you to do, because the man won’t repent.”

I mean, they went to him and the man said, “No, this is OK,” or, “I’ll just sneak around the corner without getting caught.”

He won’t repent. Paul says, “Here’s what you’ll do.” Verse 4: “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:4-5). In other words, that he would become sick, and would be so traumatized by the sickness that he would say, “Oh my God! God, I’m so desperate I repent! I repent! Please give me another chance!”

And the Lord says, “I would always give you another chance. And I will now.”

Paul says that the man’s spirit will be saved in the day of the Lord. “If this man continues untroubled, he won’t hear the word of God, so circumstances will wake him up. And so deliver him over to Satan so that the protective hand of God is lifted so that Satan has his way and destroys his flesh.” Again, he makes the man sick in a very, very serious way. And Paul says the point of this is that God loves the man and wants his spirit to be saved in the Day of the Lord—that he wouldn’t be condemned along with the world, as he said in 1 Corinthians 11:32.

IMMORALITY GROWS UNTIL IT CONSUMES THE WHOLE PERSON

Now the underlying idea is this: sin builds, and it builds to a crescendo. Immorality doesn’t stay at the level at which we dabble in it; it develops a life of its own. People imagine, “Well, I’ll dabble a little with immorality,” and they imagine they can control it, but immorality has a life of its own; it grows. They’re dabbling with it in their twenties, and they think, “Oh, I’ll get out of it one of these days,” but in their thirties they’re more entrenched than they ever imagined they would be. Or they dabble with it in their thirties. And now they’re in their forties and fifties and it has a greater stronghold. Their heart is colder. Their conscience is defiled; they’ve invited more demons into their life and they’re in ever greater bondage.

And I’ve watched people over many years of pastoring, people who were on fire for God for ten years, walking as fresh with God as anyone you know, and they dabble with a little immorality. Again, I’m not talking about the one who stumbles and then repents. They say, “You know, no one seems to know what I’m doing here, so I’ll just stay with it.” I’ve watched this over the years: they’ve been going hard after God for ten years. They dabble with it for ten or fifteen years, and they actually end up denying the Lord, because there’s a domino effect of darkness that operates in them. Their conscience gets defiled. Their mind is darkened, demons are more involved in their life, their heart is colder and their spirit is more and more dulled. And they’re saying no to the Lord more and more until they end up denying the Lord.

And this is what God knows that people don’t know, and so the Lord says “I will break in because I care so much.”

HIS REWARDS ARE SUPERIOR TO THE REWARDS OF IMMORALITY

Let's look at Jesus' eyes. Well we've looked at description number one: He has a sword. First He's going to talk to us in that focused, single subject, the subject of our sin, and He isn't going to help us in other areas. "OK!" However, it gets worse than that; I just didn't develop it.

Secondly, He says, "I'm the Son of God. I want you to have confidence that My love is superior to your sin. My power is superior to the bondage. In My wisdom, I know the way out. My rewards are superior to the rewards of immorality."

Jesus is saying, "You need to approach a path of freedom with confidence that He's God you're dealing with, a God who has power, love, and insight about you, and rewards that last forever. With that paradigm of God you will have a far greater success in saying no to immorality."

HIS EYES OF FIRE EXPRESS HIS HEART OF DESIRE

Now in the third description, Jesus says, "My eyes are like fire." The reason Jesus has burning eyes is because He has a burning heart. The reason there's fire in His eyes is because there's fire in His heart. It's a reflection of how He feels.

Now this is a very positive reality here. When Jesus' eyes of fire are touching the Church, that's a very positive thing; it's talking about His burning desire of love for us. And if we can see what He sees and feel what He feels about us, it's one of the key foundation stones to recovery from immorality. Because people become so despairing that it dulls their spirits. They feel rejected and dirty, and they say, "There is no hope for me. I might as well give up and give in!"

And the Lord says, "No, no, no you don't know that My eyes are on fire because My heart is on fire for you. I'm committed to you. I want you, even you!"

And the man says, "Really? Is that really how You feel about me?"

Now the first time we see the eyes of fire of Jesus manifest visibly in the Scriptures is in Luke 24:32. Jesus appears to the disciples on the road to Emmaus in Luke 24:32. He stands in front of them, and they don't know it's Jesus because He's veiling His glory. However, He's still the resurrected Christ and He still has eyes of fire; they just can't see it.

These guys say, "Wow! When this Man talked to us, our hearts were burning" (Lk. 24:32, paraphrased)! Do you know why their hearts were burning? Because the eyes of fire of the Lord were looking; the burning heart of Jesus was talking to them. They said, "Wow, our hearts were on fire!" That's what the burning eyes are about. That's what the burning heart is about: it's the same thing. The burning heart of Jesus; the burning eyes of Jesus: one expresses the other.

Then in Acts 2 Jesus looks down with that burning heart and those burning eyes in that first prayer meeting in the upper room. They're in that prayer meeting and suddenly the fire of God appears on all 120. Those tongues of fire are the desire of Jesus (Acts 2:3-4). He's not judging them; He's saying, "This is how I feel about you and what you're doing." What a glorious reality!

Well, John the Baptist prophesied in Luke 3 that Jesus would baptize with fire (Lk. 3:16). That's a very positive reality. He'll touch you with the revelation of how He feels about you. And He'll reveal it to you and He'll impart it through you to others.

THE WAYS OF MAN ARE BEFORE THE EYES OF THE LORD

Paragraph D. There's another dimension to His eyes: not just that they're an expression of how He feels, which is a critical part of recovery from immorality or from abstaining from immorality, to know how cherished and dear you are, and how strongly committed to you He is. Many believers don't know this dimension of the God with the burning heart for them. This dimension isn't about the love of God; this dimension creates the fear of God in us. It's the idea that He sees everything about our life.

Some believers get caught up in their sin, and they think, "Because I forgot about God, God forgot about me. And so I'm out doing what I'm doing tonight. I'm not thinking about God; God isn't thinking about me." It doesn't work that way.

It's like my little grandson: you know, he hides his head under the pillow when he's playing hide-and-seek, so now I can't find him. He's right in front of me under the pillow. He thinks that because he can't see me, I can't see him. And then I'll say, "Huh!"

And his little feet start moving: "Oops!" He didn't do it right. He's supposed to be convincing me that he's hidden.

Well, here's the idea: we lose connection with the idea that God is looking at us, which doesn't mean that God stops looking at us. This is a dimension of the fear of God. As I've wanted to grow in the fear of the Lord over the years, I'll take the scriptures on the eyes of Jesus or the eyes of God, study them, and ask the Holy Spirit to touch my heart with them. And I tell you, my awareness that God is watching reveals the eyes of fire that God loves me and that I'm dear to Him. And alongside the other dimension—that He sees everything and that everything matters to Him—I tell you, with that kind of perspective, you approach immorality in a very different way.

WHEN OUR EYES ARE DISCONNECTED FROM HIS, THAT'S WHEN BONDAGE BEGINS

Paragraph E. Being equipped to overcome immorality is related to understanding the subject of the eyes of fire. There's power in His eyes: they communicate His burning heart of love and that He knows everything. However, there's also power in what you do with your eyes. Jesus mentioned this in Matthew 5:28. Physical adultery, He said, begins with eye adultery (Mt. 5:28). Opening the eye-gate to immorality inspires your heart, and then an inspired heart in darkness eventually walks out darkness. Job said "I made a covenant with my eyes; I won't look on anything that inspires sinful lust in my heart. I will not" (Job 31:1, paraphrased)!

And so there is this dynamic connection about our eyes being connected with His eyes. Now I don't mean that we have a mystical vision of His eyes; I mean that our attentiveness is on the fact that He burns with desire for us and that He sees everything. And as we're connected to that and we turn away from our eyes being filled with ungodly things, it changes the way we feel in a very dramatic way. When our eyes get disconnected from His eyes, that's when bondage begins.

HE WILL ALTER THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT EMPOWER US TO PERSIST IN SIN

Roman numeral VI. We'll go to the fourth description. Number one: the sword. Number two: He's the Son of God. Number three: eyes of fire. Number four: feet like brass. Now again, we don't have time today to break open every bible verse that's related to this picture, but it's clear in the Scriptures what it's talking about. Brass is a picture of judgment. Jesus is saying, "To those who are in idolatry and immorality, know this: with My feet I'll step in. I'll step into your circumstances and I'll alter them in a way that hinders your ability to continue in sin." And that's a troubling thing, because we don't like it when the Lord steps into circumstances and changes them in a way that troubles us. We don't like that. And so He says, "My feet will step in; better yet, they'll step on." They'll alter the circumstances that empower us to persist in sin. He's going to cut off sinful options. He says, "I will create frustrating circumstances where you can't walk out your immorality, because I care that much about you."

Now beloved, when we know that He is really going to step in, we buy it, we believe it, and we approach immorality very differently. When we believe that He's the Son of God, we have confidence that He can deliver us and forgive us. We know how He feels about us with His eyes of fire. As for His sword, we know that He uses it either to free us or to trouble us. With this kind of approach, we look at immorality in a very different way than many people do.

Now in the Body of Christ, because there's so much neglect of the subject of immorality and Jesus' view of it, immorality is exploding in the Church. It's very, very normal. Again, sexual activity outside of marriage, whether it's in a committed relationship, a casual relationship, whether it's the homosexual agenda and activity that's being promoted as biblical and accepted into the Church—it's a lie. It's not accepted by the Bible and by Jesus. No immorality is. To all sexual activity outside of the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman, the Lord says, "It will harm you, and I'm committed to stopping you in it, and if you won't listen to Me I will increase My intervention."

And if that doesn't stop you, there's a time where the Lord lets a person go the full way, and it ends in the destruction of their life. They end up in the lake of fire in the age to come. And so we see the combination of His feet and His eyes. His eyes are the love of God, the fire of His desire. His feet are the fear of God: He's going to intervene and alter our circumstances. And we know He is. Then He talks to us about eternal rewards. And so when you put the whole thing together we have the fear of God that negative circumstances really will happen; we have the love of God that He desires us and wants us even in our brokenness, and will help us; we have the eternal rewards, because He outlined four specific eternal rewards. I'll give you just one minute on each one. And then we have confidence in God that because He's God, His power, His wisdom and His love is superior to all of the dark things that we involve ourselves in—superior and more powerful. And so with the fear of God, the love of God, eternal rewards, and confidence in God, and then superior power and love, beloved, we're on the pathway now.

Then Jesus says, "But don't forget the four motivations I'm giving you about eternal rewards. They're critical too, because if you persevere and restrain yourself in this because you love Me, I'll honor you and show you how I feel about it forever in the age to come because of your restraint in this age." There are very powerful positive consequences in the age to come.

Roman numeral VII. Jesus promises the overcomer hidden manna, the white stone with the new name, and the power to rule the nations—and, what's more, to rule them with *Him*. He says, "That person will rule the nations

in the same way the Father called Me to rule the nations. You will rule them with Me” (Rev. 2:26-27, paraphrased). And then He will give him the Morning Star (v. 28).

Paragraph B. I’m just going to give you one sentence on the manna. And there’s much to say; you could talk a long time about this subject from the biblical witness of manna. And so Jesus is saying, “I will give you an increased capacity to feed on Me; to experience Me.” Because the opposite of that was happening in the church at Pergamos. He said, “My sword is going to fight against you; but if you’ll obey Me, I’ll go in the opposite direction. I will give you an increased capacity to enjoy Me.”

“ONE STAR DIFFERS FROM ANOTHER IN GLORY”

Now some people have the wrong idea that in the age to come we’re all going to be the same. That’s not biblical at all. In the age to come we will all have a very different experience. We will have a different relationship with the Lord, just like we do in this age. Some of you will have far more insight than others. Others of you will have dimensions of glory in your resurrected body far surpassing others. Your garments will be different; yes, everyone will have the standard, white, linen gown when they come in, but there are far more garments that the Bible makes clear. Your relationship with the Lord will be different, just like it is now. Everyone’s relationship with the Lord is different.

IF WE DON’T THINK RIGHTLY ABOUT HEAVEN, WE WON’T THINK ABOUT IT AT ALL

Now I heard a preacher say once, “If we don’t think rightly about heaven we will never think about heaven.” Now that’s a very true statement. I’ll say it again “If you don’t think rightly about heaven, then you’ll never think about heaven.”

Let me tell you how to think rightly about heaven in a sentence or two. The New Jerusalem, heaven, is coming to the earth. You will have a physical, resurrected body with all the properties of the supernatural resurrection, but a physical body on this physical earth. You will eat physical food. You will drink; you will learn. You will have friendships that grow and develop. You will have a teaching ministry. You will be taught. And people are going to be able to hug you; they won’t pass through you when they hug you. You will be as substantial in your physical nature as you are now, but with all the properties of the resurrection. It will be awesome. It’s heaven on earth! You’ll rule the nations with Him. Oh, it’s exciting! You won’t be floating on a white cloud playing a harp; then every few thousand years you pass your friend and say, “Hey bro, how you doing?”

“Yeah, I love you, too! I love Jesus, but I wish there was more to do than just float on a cloud.”

Beloved, you will be on the earth with a physical body, on a physical earth, with heaven coming down to the earth. It will be the garden of Eden with all of the physical properties brought to fullness with no presence of sin. You’ll really want these rewards.

OUR REWARDS ARE THE EXPRESSION OF HOW HE FEELS ABOUT HOW WE LOVED HIM

I’ve heard people say, “Well, I don’t really care about the rewards.”

Jesus says, “You will, trust Me. I know a lot more about rewards than you do. You’ll want them because I’m the One giving them to you. And I know what you like and you really will want them.”

And our rewards will be expressions of how the Lord feels about the way we've loved Him on the earth. Rewards aren't about boasting in front of others; rewards are about Jesus expressing forever how He feels about the way we obeyed Him and loved Him during this age.

Well, let's talk about manna. He says, "If you'll obey, you'll have an increased capacity. I'll give you more." That's the idea. I mean, everyone will communicate with the Lord, but I want as much of God as I can have, forever. And I tell you, we will never exhaust all there is of God. We will forever be growing in our capacity.

"I WILL GIVE HIM A WHITE STONE, AND ON THE STONE A NEW NAME WRITTEN"

Paragraph C. He goes on to say, "I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written" (Rev. 2:17). The word *white* in Greek means *bright* or *splendid* or *lustrous*; it's a glowing, precious stone. And the word *stone* means "precious stone." In the ancient world they would give what we think of as medals of honor for valiant service or heroic activity in the military.

Jesus says, "I will give you as a token of the way I feel about the way you love Me this bright, shining, precious stone. And I will write on it things that no one will know that will declare how I feel about the way you loved Me and about our relationship."

Beloved, it will be one of your most prized possessions forever. You might have a few of them; you might not get any of them, but the Lord says, "They're like the medals of honor, like a gold medal, but far more glorious." And they're not to show others to boast about, but they're one of the greatest possessions you'll ever have, because the Lord says, "This is how I feel about the way you lived on the earth." Beloved I want one of those, or a few of them; I don't know, I just want as many as I can get.

RELEVANT IMPACT IN THE AGE TO COME AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL

Paragraph E. The third motivation: power over the nations. Relevant impact in the age to come at the highest level; and not only that, but in partnership with Jesus. I don't want to just be governing something over there unless it's with Him and for Him. It's together under the mandate that the Father gave Him.

HE WHO RULES HIS SPIRIT IS MIGHTIER THAN HE WHO TAKES A CITY

Proverbs 16:32. I don't have that on the notes, but it says, "A man who rules his spirit is mightier than one who captures a city" (Prov. 16:32, paraphrased). To rule your spirit means to restrain your spirit, or you could even say "to restrain your flesh." Jesus said, "If you'll rule your spirit, if you'll restrain your spirit, if you'll restrain yourself because you love Me, and you can't even see Me, you will rule the nations with Me in the age to come if you rule your spirit for Me in this age. If you'll rule your spirit because you love Me, you will rule the nations with Me." How glorious!

"I, JESUS, AM THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR"

Paragraph F. The fourth reward. He says, "I will give him the morning star" (Rev. 2:28). We learn a bit later, in Revelation 22:16, that this is Jesus. He says, "By the way, I'm the Morning Star" (Rev. 22:16, paraphrased). He says, "I will give you an increased interaction with Me, and My brightness will touch you. Your mind, your emotions, your ministry, your body: My brightness will be imparted to you and through you. And you'll interact with Me according to the way you loved Me on the earth."

It will matter. Again, we will all have a resurrected body. We will all have the basic, white garments. We will all have a house. We will all have access to the city. We will all be at the worship meetings. However, I want more than that: I want to be deeply involved with Him. I want to have tokens of how He feels about the way I loved Him on the earth.

You know, Jesus said, “I’ll give you that white stone”—that bright stone. Again, it was like a medal of honor for heroic service. You know what? The Lord sees us resisting immorality as heroic. He sees it as heroic! He says, “No one else will even know because you didn’t do it! They don’t even know the struggle, but I saw it because you loved Me. It’s heroic to Me, and I will show you how I feel when I see you face to face.”