



# SONG OF SONGS

*A Biblical Vision for Marriage, Sex, and the Body*

## Song of Songs: Walls and Doors

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### Song of Songs 8:8-14

Good morning, Doxa. Today we'll be reading out of Song of Songs, chapter eight, verses eight through 14.

"Others: We have a little sister, and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister on the day when she is spoken for? If she is a wall, we will build on her a battlement of silver, but if she's a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar. She: I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers; then I was in his eyes as one who finds peace. Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-haman; he let out the vineyard to keepers; each one was to bring for its fruit a thousand pieces of silver. My vineyard, my very own, is before me; you, O Solomon, may have the thousand, and the keepers of the fruit two hundred. He: O you who dwell in the gardens, with companions listening for your voice; let me hear it. She: Make haste my beloved and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices."

This is the word of the Lord. You may be seated.

Well, hey, good morning, everybody. Doing all right? All good. It's dark, it's wet out there. I hope that the word of God will bring us a little bit of joy, a little bit of sunshine, a little bit of peace this morning. As you heard the reading we've got quite a task in front of us, so it's going to be a challenge. For those of you that are totally new, we are in week 10 of 11 in the book of Song of Songs, so it's almost over. The mercy of God is coming if you've been with us. For those of you that are totally new to the series, as you heard, the Song of Songs, is essentially love poetry found in the Old Testament, that gives us a biblical vision for marriage, sex, relationships, and the body. And so that's the task we have in front of us.

If you are interested in having us answer some questions, we have a QR code here for our Q and R, our question and response. And so you can scan that if you've got questions around the series, sex, marriage, dating, the body, that's a perfect way to get those answered. Next week to end the series, we're going to be doing a panel discussion around a lot of the questions that you guys have been sending in if we haven't gotten to them through already. Okay? Does that feel good? We feel like we're oriented? Alright, let me pray for us. Most importantly, we need God's presence here with us as we tackle such a tough topic here this morning.

Well, Lord, we ask for your presence here this morning. We need the Holy Spirit. I need the Holy Spirit as I preach, Lord God. I pray for my friends here as we sort of unpack some maybe, perhaps past wounds that we all have. Would you be gentle? Would you be kind to them? Would our hearts and minds be receptive to what you have to say? I pray for me, Lord God. I pray for the spirit on me that you would give me courage to communicate clearly what you have; calm, to communicate it in a timely manner, and also clarity, Lord, would it be clear to my friends here. And I pray against the enemy, his allies, his works and effects. I pray that the presence and power of Jesus would reign here this morning. Would this room, this building be sealed by the Holy Spirit as we tackle such tough topics, Lord God. Accusation may come Lord, but we know that you're the father of peace and so we ask for your peace here this morning as we go through this. I pray for any friends that are experiencing any accusations. I pray anyone who's experiencing any frustrations in their marriages or in their singleness, Lord God, would you be kind to them as we communicate this word in, Jesus' name. Amen.

Alright. Like I mentioned, Song of Songs is a series of conversations, interactions, intimate moments between a husband and wife. That's what we've been walking through over the last two and a half months-ish. Okay? Now we've seen them in conflict. We've seen them describe their beauty to one another. It's been great. We've seen them pursue each other. We've seen them embrace one another throughout this poetry that we've been working through. And here we get to a rather controversial, I'll say, at least for 2023 in the modern western world, controversial point that the woman in the story, our main character so to speak, she wants to make. So to set up our time, I'm going to explain this sort of flashback story we get from these "Others", or perhaps her brothers as many commentaries think.

And what they're doing is they're recalling the woman when she was a young girl and what her demeanor should have been as she approached marriage. That's sort of what we're getting to here. Let's go back through verse eight in our text. They say this, perhaps the brothers, they say, we have a little sister and she has no breasts. What shall we do for our sister on the day when she is spoken for? Well, if she's a wall, we will build on her a battlement of silver, but if she is a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar. Okay, what is that? Good question. Hopefully I can try to answer some of it for you. But essentially there's an analogy here going on. When it says when she has no breasts, it's essentially a euphemism or poetry for, Hey, listen, our sister is young, she's young, and she's not mature, right? And so our sister, she's young, and then they ask the question, well, what will we do for her when she gets married?

Well, if she was a wall, they're going to work with military prestige to protect and honor their sister. That's what these embattlements of silver mean. And then she'll be rewarded essentially with their blessing and support if she was a wall. Now, being a wall means, in this context as we'll see, means that she remains sexually inactive before marriage. She carried herself with worthiness, honor and value into her marriage, sexually, emotionally, spiritually, if she was a wall. But then they say, and if she was a door, we will enclose her with boards of cedar. Now, what does that mean? Well, many commentators believe that this means that if the woman was prone to essentially premarital sexual activity, she's not a virgin, then we will work to protect her with a chastity belt style volition, reminding her of the necessity of saving the sexual experience for marriage.

So what we get here, and this is what I'm tasked to teach you, or at least help teach you, help you understand, is that we get a comparison between walls and doors leading up to marriage. So you may ask, how in 2023 do we take an admonition from the Bible, a 2000-year-old book or so, some parts much, much older than that. How do we take an admonition from scripture to be sexually pure before marriage and apply it to our current day? How are we going to do that? I mean, times have changed. I mean, times have changed. I mean, there's Twitter now. I mean, there's other things like you have the internet. This isn't the good old days of the 1950s where everyone was pure, okay? Well, at least pretended to be pure, right? Have we evolved? Haven't we evolved beyond such a principle? Haven't we? Aren't we free to make our own decisions around sex and purity now? I mean, we've evolved. We've got different things. There's sex-ed class in school that give out protection. We should be able to handle this ourselves.

And besides, what about the church purity movement in the 1980s and 90s? Didn't that do a lot of damage to young people? Shouldn't we like reevaluate the fact that we're, we're talking about walls and doors here. Didn't that hurt some people? Maybe that's your story, right? Remember the church purity movement. Sex is weird and uncomfortable, so don't talk about it and save it for the one you love the most. Remember that? It was awkward, right? Answering these questions without something bigger than ourselves really to point to leaves us with merely a bunch of best practices that may or may not work based on our story or the story of other people we sort of heard about anecdotally, right? So the question is then, well, where do we go from here? Do I give you a list of what not to do and what to do in a dating relationship? Is that going to be most helpful?

Let's see the woman's response, how she responds to and with her brothers. Verse 10, she says this, I had the choice, but I was a wall. I was a wall, and my breasts were like towers. Then I was in his eyes as one who finds peace. Well, what does that mean? It says that she makes a decision. She says, I was a wall. I'm going to decide I was a wall. I decided that even though I'd matured, there's the euphemism right there. I decided I was going to be a wall and I'm going to preserve myself for my husband and then in his eyes, I'll find the peace that I seek. Now, many of you know how unpeaceful marriage can be at times, right? It's very difficult to navigate. Peace in a marriage is a wonderful thing to find. And certainly marriage is already hard enough to have and to navigate. And so having this element of peace makes it all the more wonderful and easy. I was a wall. I was a wall. This is what I want for you today. I want for you to choose

wall. Now, as you know, as I'm sort of preaching to the choir here, in many ways, for many of us, it's not that simple, is it? It's not that simple. Just be a wall. Okay? There's so many different situations, right? What if I've already not been a wall? What about the cultural pressures I face? Like what are you talking about, be a wall? How do I choose that? Regardless, today we're going to talk about why you, friend, should choose wall over door, even if you think it's too late. Even if you think it's too late. So I think this sermon will be helpful for all people here, but also for most of us, I do think while it will be helpful, it will be painful. Maybe you've already sort of caught that a little bit, because today we may indirectly at least reopen some failures or some regrets, or some would'ves, could'ves and should'ves in our lives that maybe we wish we had back.

So here's my hope today for you, for all of us. I'm not going to preach at you a list of moralisms for you to handle, and if you do that you go to heaven, and if you don't, you go to hell. That's not the gospel. That's cold, hard, isolated religion and it lacks God. It lacks the grace of God. Here's my hope for you today, that today we let the truths of scripture cut us open, and then we allow the Holy Spirit to perform a spiritual surgery on us and our souls. And then we're going to let the story of the cross of Jesus Christ sew us back up. Let the scripture open us up, let the Spirit do surgery, and let the story of Jesus, the gospel, stitch us back up. And I think by the end, you'll be armed with the tools to be far stronger in your marriages or far stronger in your singleness, and certainly more strong in your faith.

So what does it mean to be a wall? What does it mean to be wall? What does it mean to be a door? And what's the difference between the two? And really how can we find our way back to Jesus? Who by the way, was a wall for us? How? Let's start at the top. If you have a choice, if you have a choice, when given the choice, choose wall. That's my admonition for you. You might say, well, I mean, I don't know if necessarily the way we live in 2023 aligns with the Bible. I'm going to tell you as a pastor of a church here in Redmond, Washington, to choose the wall choice, the path that scripture leads out. Now, I want to be clear, because I think that clarity is honoring to you, and I want you to know where we stand.

I want you to know where the Bible stands on a lot of these things. This woman chooses wall, okay? And as we've seen throughout this series, she has the ideal marriage. At least one that's worth pursuing, right? Because remember, Song of Songs is really a pursuit of this ideal marriage. And clearly they have a great marriage in a lot of different ways. It's not perfect, but it's wonderful. Now part of the glory of their marriage is that she waited. She waited for her husband in marriage. That's what she's telling us as we end the book. And guess what? It was worth the wait. It was worth the wait. So for you young people and all of us really maybe that are single here, I want to tell you as a pastor of a church, but certainly just as a man, as someone who's read the scripture, save your body. Save your body. Save your body, your mind, your spirit for marriage.

Hey, if you're especially young, your body is not gross or weird. It's neither of those things. Actually, in fact, God says your body is amazing. And it's interesting, but it's also normal to be curious about an amazing creation like your body. Your body, in fact, is so amazing that God

wants you to share it with just one person-the person you decide to marry, the person of your choosing. So when you take this amazing creation that your body is into the world, especially as a young or maybe even single person, when the guy, or even as a married person, when the guy puts on the full-court press for you to do things you don't want to do, here's what you say: No. Nope. Not interested. When the girl, the overly frilly girl comes to you and puts on the full-court press, what you can say is: No. No. No. I'm not good.

It's interesting being in middle school and high school, if you're not there, we all remember it, even college, the cool kids all sort of want to stand out. They want to be different. And what's funny is, if you just take a sociological look at any middle school, or any high school in America, what you'll find is all kids divide themselves into two or maybe three groups anyway. So no one's all that different, right? You've got your jocks, you've got your goths, you got your smart kids, you got your chess player. There's just like a number of groups you sort of categorize yourself. In an effort to be different, we all end up being the same. That's how school is. That's how it works. We're creatures of habit.

But if you really want to be different, do something really unique. You want to be average like everybody else, give your body away. You want to be different, well, save your body for marriage. Read your Bible. Because people aren't doing that anymore. They don't read the scripture. They don't save their body because they understand their value of their body. Value yourself at the highest levels because that's how God sees you. He sees you as wonderful. When you're all alone, you have free access to the internet, choose no. No. No, I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to do that. This is not the life that God chose for me. I want to be different.

Now, door-life as we'll explain is painful and complicated and many of us understand that. And remember, we are opening some wounds. I'm not ignorant to that fact. But as we've talked about, when we enter into marriage, you and I, we're going to bring our past relationships, actions, and preconceived notions with us. It complicates our lives. Marriage is already hard enough. So when we add these future challenges to it, it makes it all the more difficult, right? And so for those of us that are making this decision, God gives us a concept to help us think through what it means to be a wall. And that's to be set apart, to be set apart. Actually, he gives us a word for this, the word holy. You know, you've heard the word holy. The word holy means to be set apart. So it sounds like really churchy in this sense, but if you say set apart, you go, oh, that just means I'm distinct. I'm different. I'm valued. Yeah, that's the point, right? So when we're walls, we're set apart. Another word again is holy in the Old Testament.

Now, in the Old Testament, God gave Israel, listen to this, the law, so that the law might set them apart from among the nations as an example to the surrounding world, that they were God's people. That's what it is. So when you and I, when we remain set apart with our bodies, especially today, people are going to be curious because we don't look like anybody else. They'll say wait a second. Why aren't you in a relationship? Like, why aren't you active sexually? Why aren't you intimate with other people? Why aren't you looking at the stuff online that we're looking at? Like, why are you, and they may get frustrated with you. They may get upset with

you. They may sort of laugh at you. They may ignore you. But they're frustrated. Secretly they might envy you. You're different. When we remain set apart with our bodies, people are going to look and we say to them, listen, I'm not doing those things because I belong to Jesus, and I believe Jesus Christ rose from the dead. I believe he values my body, and my body should be given to one person and one person only. That's what I believe, right?

Man, everything is so casual today. Everything is casual today. You know, first time I knew I wanted to be a pastor I was 19 years old, and I was sitting in a church with sweatpants and flip flops. Talk about casual. I was casual. We're casual today. Everything is casual, even things that shouldn't be. Relationships are casual. Intimacy is casual. Just having a casual, intimate relationship. And oftentimes we take our faith very casually too. Devotion to God and being holy or set apart is not something that can be casual. It's impossible. It does not allow for such an idea. Being devoted to God means that we must remain set apart from among the people so that way they know that we worship and love Jesus. We must be set apart. I mean, look at how the woman, the wife in the story sees this. Look at verse 11. I'll explain.

Solomon had a vineyard in Baal Haman; he let out his vineyard to tenants. Each was to bring for its fruit a thousand shekels of silver. But my own vineyard is mine to give; the thousand shekels are for you, O Solomon, and two hundred are for those who tend its fruit. What is she talking about? Like what? What was that? Like that's the Bible? Like is all the bible that complicated, complex? No, it's not. But again, this semi-erotic love poetry found in the Old Testament. It's meant for us to take its wisdom and try to apply it to our lives. And so what is she saying? Well, the woman, she's juxtaposing the quote Vineyard of Solomon, which by the way was vast and he paid out a lot for its fruit, to her more essential simple vineyard, which was hers and hers alone.

Now, why compare to Solomon? Well, the analogy is Solomon had a thousand wives and concubines. A thousand! You know, that's probably a rough estimate, right? They're probably rounding up or rounding down, right, because he had so many. It was big, his vineyard. It was massive, so to speak. Many people came through that vineyard, but her vineyard was hers and her vineyard was hers alone, preserved for her spouse and preserved for God himself. Solomon, guys, he wrote a lot of the Old Testament, but he was not set apart. He wasn't set apart. He was just like everybody else, but on steroids. He had so much more money and so much more wisdom. Was that God's desire for Solomon? Is God prescribing you to be like him? No. In fact, Solomon himself says that was really dumb. That was worthless. I shouldn't have done that. He even says it himself. He was not holy. He was not set apart and he did not honor God with his life.

Guys, culture does not tell you to set yourself apart. It doesn't tell you to set yourself apart. Culture says everyone's doing it. It doesn't say don't do it. It says, oh, everyone's doing it. That's funny, for a culture that wants to be so differentiated from one another, we sure do find ourselves in the similar patterns. Now this approach not only does not set us apart in culture, but it exposes us. And this idea of door in and of itself as the analogy implies that people can be

entered, and walls cannot be. Now for 93% of humanity here in the United States that marries, there is wonder and glory in preserving yourself and remaining a wall and being set apart. Look at where it leads in verse 13. This is the end of the book of Song of Songs. Look how it ends. It ends with a back and forth between a husband and a wife. O you who dwell in the gardens, with companions listening for your voice; let me hear it. I want to hear from you. Make haste, my beloved, and be like a gazelle or a young stag on the mountains of spices. So what we see here is them riding off into the sunset together, sharing their hearts, sharing their bodies, sharing their minds, enjoying one another without shame. It's beautiful, right? Be a wall.

As I mentioned, it's possible that we may feel levels of guilt and embarrassment maybe for how we've behaved in the past. You hear some stuff like that, maybe you're angry with me. I think that makes sense. You don't like what the Bible has to say in this area, or maybe you're feeling a lot of embarrassment or shame around these issues. And maybe you're thinking, man, is it too late for me to be a wall? Can I still be a wall? Is that possible? Yes, it is possible. It's absolutely possible. You can. For those in Jesus, it's never too late to be made new.

But I will say there are a few barriers to us feeling like we can move from living like door and moving to wall. There are three things I think that do hold us back in our hearts. Now remember, we're doing surgery. The first thing that holds us back from being the wall that God has called us to is a lack of repentance. There are those of us that maybe have lived elements of door life and maybe have minimized our sin. Not a big deal. We've denied our sin. Ah, it wasn't my fault. I mean, they made me do it. Or maybe we just felt generally sorry for what we did, but never really repented and never really talk about it. We just try to pretend like it never happened. We call that worldly sorrow. We feel bad that it happened.

Repentance, if you know what this word means in its two original languages, when you think about how's it explained in the Old Testament and New Testament, it means kind of a combination of two things-to change your mind and to turn your back. These are the two sort of elements of repentance-to change your mind and to turn your back. By power of the Holy Spirit, I'm able to change my mind about what I've done and turn my back-to change our minds about the way we've lived and to decide that God's way is best and to turn our backs to our sin and leaving those old lives behind and turning our face to Jesus in worship.

Have you done both? Have you done both? Have you turned your back and changed your mind? Because it's really easy actually to change our mind about the things we're doing, but then not turn our back and still do them. It's also really easy to know we did something really dumb that God's convicted us to hear that and to turn our back, but then to not change our mind, to look back and go, man, those were some good days. Oh man, I was just a young kid running around. Oh man, I remember the glory days, right? We sort of glorify our past lives and we haven't actually changed our mind about how that affects our lives, how it affects our spouse or future spouse, or how it affects your relationship with God. Have you turned your back and changed your mind? So the question for you here is, what in your life or past life have you not truly repented of?

What have you minimized, denied, or ignored? And what's stopping you from repenting? This could be the thing actually holding you back from experiencing Christ at a new level. This actually could be the thing that's holding you back from maybe finding a spouse if you're single. This could be the thing that's holding you back from having fullness in your marriage. And it could be the thing that's pushing you towards leaving a marriage you're in.

Now, if you have any doubt about whether or not you need to repent, bring that to God and lay at his feet. Hey, God, have I, have I dealt with this in my past? Have I worked through this? Do I need to repent? The Bible says, if when we sin, when we miss the mark, when we commit atrocities against God and against our own bodies and harm ourselves, it gives the devil a foothold in our lives, which means that for those of you that climb a foothold is a nice place to step and hold onto the side of a mountain. A lack of repentance is how our flesh holds us back. Sometimes we actually believe we need healing in our lives from sin when in fact we also need repentance. And so we've been sitting around looking for healing when God actually wants you to repent as well and to turn your back, and to change your mind.

Another thing that holds us back from experiencing being a wall is that maybe you've repented but you don't feel free, and accusations continue. Like I told you, we're doing some surgery here today. So maybe you're examining your life and you're thinking, yeah, I know I've done some bad things. I feel like I've worked through those, but I feel like I've genuinely repented, and I want to move on. I've put this before God's feet. I've laid it at his feet. I've confessed. I've repented. But I'm sort of feeling like I'm continually reminded of the wrong that I've done. Like it's on my spirit. And maybe there are sort of intrusive thoughts, let's call them, as psychologists might say, that you are not forgiven. You're not forgiven. You're not forgiven. You're not forgiven. Or there could be people in your life reminding you of the sin that you committed, and they've dangled it in front of your face.

Or maybe that you thought you repented, but others keep telling you, you're dirty, you're broken, you're lost, or you're going to hell. Friends, a lot of people are there, okay? A lot of people are there in that moment. If you've repented to Jesus for your past sin and you've made a decision to change your mind about what you've done and it turn your back on it truly and deeply, and you believe with all your heart that Jesus Christ died on the cross and resurrected three days later on all of our behalf as well as yours, then you are, my friend, forgiven. Full stop. That's the gospel. If you hear otherwise, you're likely hearing demonic accusation. Psychologists use the term intrusive thoughts like I'm having suicidal ideations, but they're intrusive, meaning they're coming from outside. The Bible calls that demonic accusation. The Bible says that the devil is uninterested in you feeling free in Christ and wants you to stay in prison to his sin, even if you've repented of it. That's their strategy, demon's strategy. And they will work in your mind, and in the media, and in the hearts of other people that tell you you're still unclean. That's demonic accusation.

Now, friends, I've been sinned against. You've been sinned against. We've all been sinned against. People have hurt us. But here's what I would say to you. Be very careful not to allow how other people's sins affected you be used as a means of condemnation on their life.



Be very careful because Satan creates lies. He's the father of all lies. And what he'll like to do is he takes half-truths and twists, turns, manipulates them, and all of a sudden, the rightful hurt you experienced comes out as venom and accusation on the life of someone you really care about and love. And in fact, what you're trying to do is get your needs met, but in fact, you're actually acting as a puppet for demonic accusation. Be very careful. I just feel like I've got to take a moment right here and just pray for us if you don't mind. I'm going to pray for all of our marriages, for our singleness, for our relationship with God. Let me do that. Well, Lord, I want to ask for your spirit here. It is not easy walking through something like this and hearing stuff like this. Our marriages are on the line, our friendships are on the line. Our relationship with you is on the line. What we need is your truth, that you're a good God and good savior who loves us, who has come for us. And that what you call clean is clean and it stays that way. And I ask for those of us that are feeling condemnation that should not be wearing, would that fall off them by the power of the Holy Spirit. And I pray for conviction for those of us who need to experience true and accurate repentance, in Jesus name, amen.

Accusation is how the enemy holds us back. There's one more though. There's one more way that we can't move to wall or stay wall. And it's this, you were a wall, but someone tore your wall down. Sometimes, friends, as you well know, we don't have a choice when someone decides to rob us of our purity. There are those, many of us who have experienced obviously sexual assault or abuse. And let me just say, there's nothing up here I can say that's going to make any of that be solved. I just want to be clear about that. There's nothing any human being can stand up here and fix you. You can get Tony Robbins up here or John MacArthur or Stephen Furtick up here. No one's going to solve your problems. Martin Luther King could come up here himself and he could have a dream but it's not going to solve your problem. It's just not. I just want to say, all I can say to you is give you the truth, say, I'm so sorry for what's happened to you. You've been sinned against. God did not want what happened to you to happen. And there's evil in this world that sometimes overcomes people, sometimes people we love, or even people that we don't know, and they use that evil to destroy us. Maybe when we were kids, when we were in the care of a trusted person or even a boldfaced stranger you've never seen in your life. I want you to know God loves you. He desires to minister to you. The pain you experience today is a sad reminder that this world is not the way it's supposed to be. And you know firsthand how devastating the effects of a sinful world are.

You were meant for a world of safety. You were supposed to be safe. You were supposed to be protected. You were supposed to carry your freedom of conscience for your entire life and that was taken from you. What I will say is that you have a God of justice, a God who will smite out the evil that's been done to you. God plans on pouring out his wrath on the wicked on your behalf. And no, the Bible says no ungodly deed will go unpunished. And he wants to draw closer to you and promises you a future where finally you can be free of the shame maybe you carry today. So let me just take a moment and call out how we all might be feeling.

Isn't life so complicated? Isn't relationships, marriage, isn't this all so complicated? Like we're in this book of the Bible that's so complicated to read from the jump. We don't even read the same language that it was written in and it's written thousands of years ago. And here it is as

the word of God trying to help us in a moment like this. And we're chasing down this ideal marriage in Song of Songs, but we're sort of all left with feelings of inadequacy and loneliness and shame and frustration. And we're like, what are we supposed to do? How do we fix our marital problems? Like I feel like we've gone 10 weeks and I'm like, I got some practical advice, but how do I truly fix all of this? How do I live as a single person who wants to get married? I don't have any idea. I haven't learned anything. How do I deal with a divorce? How do I deal with a divorce that I caused or the divorce that they caused? Can I remarry? How do I cope with the abuse that's been done to me? How am I supposed to manage this? How do I wrestle with my addiction that's putting a relationship strain on my marriage or my family? How do I deal with my own sexual past because it's got a lot of shame that I'm carrying. How do I deal with that? Hmm.

And so here we're left with this tension that all the books of the Bible leave us with in the Old Testament. And that's that we can give our all to fixing all of our issues, our relationships, our strains, and guess what? It still might not work and we still might be left totally unsatisfied. Why? Because of this thing called the human heart. Because of sin. And it sort of all leaves us feeling wildly insufficient to fix our issues and all leaving us asking one big, massive question. Can somebody come and fix all this? If you're asking that, I'm glad you asked.

I'll leave you with two things. For those of us that feel like we've made mistakes, sin in our past, feel distant from God in our relationship, marriage, singleness, whatever, as a result of your sin, I want to work through two big doctrinal theological points for you. Okay? Here's what you need to know if that's you. Our sin separates us from God. Our sin separates us from God. Like no, literally separates us from God. Like the reason why you can't hear God talk to you, the reason why you don't know if he's really there, the reason why you feel separated when you do something silly or stupid in your life, the reason why you experience that separation is literally because of your sin. Our sin has produced a chasm in relationship between us and God and between us and one another, and one that with all the strategy, and even all the lament to God, it still seems insurmountable to cross. God sends Jesus for this reason.

And so let me unpack this big, if you'll allow me, a big theological concept to help you get this more firmly. It's this word propitiation. Bear with me. You see, the only way a just God can ever be in communion with a sinful people is for them to experience judgment and for a judgment to be carried out. Otherwise, God is by definition unjust, right? God can't violate the character of himself. If he lets an injustice that you and I commit slide without penalty, he's no longer just. Does that make sense? If a judge goes, oh, you murdered someone, ah, it's cool, I'll let you go, is that just to the family of the dead person? No, it's not. God cannot violate his own character and so he cannot let the injustice slide. So instead of God pouring out judgment on us for our sin, which the judgment is death, he sends Jesus instead. Jesus goes to Calvary where God's judgment is poured out on him. The wrath of God is poured out on Jesus himself. And there at Calvary, Jesus becomes a sacrificial offering, taking on the penalty of the sins that you and I commit in our marriage, our sexual sin, our adulteries, our singleness, our betrayals, and everything else we do-to slander, the thievery, the idolatry, everything else goes to Jesus on the cross. Then and only then can you and I be no longer responsible for the sin that we commit.

Jesus takes God's wrath and in return, Jesus gives us his perfect righteousness. And just not any old person could pay that penalty for you. Because if it was like, well, hey, I'm Pastor Eddie, I'll go to the cross. I'll go to the cross for you. God would be like, no, you got your own stuff to pay for. So it can't just be any of us. It has to be a perfect righteous offering. Propitiation then is the turning away of God's punishment on us by Him offering the sacrificial gift of Jesus Christ's death on the cross.

You see, friends, when we are doors, I'll just be straight with you, in our thoughts, words, motives, in our actions, and in our sexual sin, or really in any other way, it's a big deal. It's such a big deal that not only does it separate you from God, but Jesus died for it. He literally died for it. The good news is that Jesus willingly went to the cross so you can be righteous before God. First John four says this, "And this is love..." Love sometimes we confuse with being nice. Those aren't the same thing. You've all met a really nice person who is very unloving, right? Love is something more. Not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the what? Propitiation for our sins. God pours out his righteous judgment on Jesus instead of us. God loves you enough to die for you. You.

So what is there to do? Repent. Turn your back, change your mind today, now. Now turn your back on your sin. Change your mind. Cling to Jesus for new life. Because Jesus has offered a precious gift. You no longer have to live with the sin that you've done. You no longer have to carry around the things you've done. You can actually give them, lay them at the foot of the cross and have him absorb those for you. And hear me, you must acknowledge the weightiness of your sin. You have to. And maybe you've been minimizing that, but you have to give that to Jesus because Jesus died for the sin you minimize. Okay? That's for those of us who feel like we've made mistakes with sin or feel distant from God. And that's all of us, right? But for those of us that maybe feel like you've been wronged, like someone has committed a sin against you, maybe abuse, betrayal or anything, sin uses a metaphor throughout the Bible that sin is like being unclean.

I'm going to unpack now the doctrine of expiation. We sort of feel and experience brokenness. We feel lost. We feel unclean. We feel unworthy because sin exists in the world. And guess what? If sin wasn't here, you wouldn't feel that way. Those things come because of sin. Sin has infected us with this condition, and we live with this feeling of uncleanliness because our souls are stained with sin. And when people sin against us, what they do is, when they betray us and abuse us, we feel a deeper sense of dirtiness because they're lumping their dirt on us too. And I'm not ignorant to the fact that I know many of you feel unclean right now. Maybe some of us we feel damaged. And you know what? Some of us have taken a toothbrush to our souls and have scrubbed trying to get off the landfill that somebody else dumped all over us. And you know what? That won't work.

What we need is to be made clean from the sin that we've committed, but also the sin that has been committed against us. And hear me, we can't do it ourselves. This is why God offers Jesus as the sacrifice. He goes to the cross and he takes on sin that we've done, but he also takes on all of the disgust and dirt we feel when other people sin against us. He takes our dirtiness and

our uncleanness. He becomes dirty on our behalf. He becomes unclean on our behalf, and then we can take on his cleanliness and we get to leave feeling made new, wearing white, brand new, able to be a wall because our dirtiness is gone because of what Jesus did. Jeremiah 33 says, I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I'll forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.

Zachariah 13 says, on that day, there shall be a fountain opened from the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to what? Cleanse them from sin and uncleanness. You have shame? Jesus can take your shame and wash it away. You have guilt? Jesus can take your guilt and wash it away. And the result is you can be made new, clean, and now you can fellowship again with people who look each other in the eye and go, man, I'm broken, you're broken, I did some dumb stuff, something dumb happened to me. And we can sit together in a community and go thank God for Jesus.

First John one says, if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves. And the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Do you want to be clean? Then go to Jesus. Cling to his cloak. You've been scrubbing so long you can't repent of something you didn't do. Let his sacrifice count on your behalf. And guess what? Then again, you can be a wall.

In case you didn't catch this, you being a wall was never about your performance or your behavior. You being a wall was never about you being able to be sexually pure. You being a wall was always about your willingness to let someone better be a wall on your behalf. His name's Jesus. So be a wall, a wall for righteousness, a wall for godliness, a wall in your singleness, a wall for your marriage, for truth, for love, for perseverance, the same way Jesus was a wall for you. And so it is. Let's pray.

Father, I pray for a spirit of healing on us, Lord God, that you would allow the cross and its good news to bandage us up. Sometimes we hear messages like this and we experience these accusational levels of shame for things we haven't done, Lord. And I pray that you would push that back by the power of the spirit and you would let them know, no, you're made clean. You're my son, you're my daughter. I've died for you. I've died to cleanse you. Nothing else offers us this, Lord. A secular worldview can't offer us justice when we've been wronged. A secular worldview can't offer us a new life, but you can. I pray for us as we repent of our sins. May those be sure. May we turn our back and change our mind and would the same power that rose Jesus Christ from the grave be present here. And as we take communion together, would he be present. Would it change us. Would it shape us.

I just want to pray one more time against accusation, Lord. I feel as if I can't help but experience and feel that there are people in the room that say, no, this isn't true. You are broken. It's too late. They don't know what you've done. It's too bad. You've gone too far. Lord Jesus, would you tell them that there is no chasm you aren't willing to traverse, to jump across to find them, that you've chased them down and you're here for them now, that the accusations can fall off

and that once real repentance is recognized, they can experience real freedom and real cleanliness. We love you in Jesus' name, Amen.