

## Becoming Free from Sexual Bondage

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Rich Nathan  
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For those of you who have been here, I have been doing a series on the Kingdom of God, which is, as I have mentioned several times, the most basic theme of the Bible. If you try to capture what is the theme, the underlying unified theme of the Bible, it is the theme of God's rule being extended first through the choice of one man, Abraham, and then the choice of Abraham's descendants, the Jews, and then the extension and expansion of God's rule going beyond the Jewish people to include Gentiles. Now God in our time is extending his rule and reign through a new people called The Church. Even in world history when they say with all the wars and different dates and all the personalities and kings and governments and inventions, what is the theme of history, the underlying theme of history is that history is his story. It's the story of God. His story and how he is extending his rule, he is extending his government over this planet.

The reason why God needs to extend his rule over a planet that he created is that his rule and reign has been opposed by a counterfeit kingdom, a usurper, a rebel, named Satan who has from the time of our original parents, the time of Adam and Eve, drawn people into a civil war against God. Just like the American South was drawn away from the rightful government of the United States centered in Washington and the South became rebellious and launched a war on the North, so mankind has been drawn away by this counterfeit ruler and king and has launched a war against God. And as Lincoln and the North didn't just sit on their hands and say, "Well that's okay, I guess we will just live with two nations and two governments – one legitimate and one illegitimate. Go ahead and break the Union. We won't force our government upon you. After all, we are all free to choose." God mercifully has not washed his hands of people.

And even when people rebel against God, even when people follow the counterfeit kingdom and obey the rules and government of the counterfeit king named Satan, God aggressively goes to war to re-establish his government in people's lives. God doesn't simply say, "Well, you know, if that is your choice to not follow me that is okay. Hey, I am a 90s type of God. I don't like to push myself on anyone." Our God is a God of war who actively goes to war to re-establish his reign and to promote his rule in our lives.

There are several wonderful things about this idea that God goes to war and that he just doesn't let us go. Like Lincoln and the North, he goes to war to re-establish his good government. There are several wonderful things about this. Perhaps the most wonderful is that all the results of his increased government in our lives are good. We find the fulfillment and satisfaction that we have been looking for, the freedom, the cleanness, and the peace. That every time God takes ground back, every time God takes over another area of your life or takes a person back who is a rebel, takes a rebellious pocket in your life back, it results in your good.

The second neat thing is that the way that God increases his government is by using us, the church. We are the army of God. We may be a pretty ragtag bunch, like the Union soldiers were and really like all American armies have been, or at least most at

the beginning of the conflict – pretty green, not super well-equipped to do battle, not clear about our objectives, not sure what price it will take to win a victory. We may be like most American armies have been – hardly the sort of fighting force that you want to bank on for victory. Yet Almighty God says to us in the Vineyard: You are my army. I am going to use you and churches like you here in the Columbus community to extend my government, to push Satan back on his heels, to take back ground that has been overrun by rebels. You are my fighting force.

When we talk about in the fall building a new auditorium and engaging in a building campaign, it is in the context of this whole notion of the extension of the Kingdom of God. That God is actively pursuing men and women. He hasn't washed his hands of our community or our school system. He hasn't washed his hands of the OSU campus or our suburban neighborhoods. God is not content to watch the inner city continue to decay or to watch kids grow up and get into gangs.

God is on the move. God is raising up an army.

Part of what we are going to be engaged in is, as a church, the recapturing of God's heart and mind. We are going to get greater clarity concerning what it means to be in a relationship with almighty God. I believe as we gain God's mind, as we understand the story of history and our part in the story, taking this next step as a church will be an obvious step. It will be an easily understood step.

This morning I want to talk about God extending his kingdom and government over our sexuality. I am going to talk about a very personal area of our lives and that is our sex lives. For those of you who are familiar with your bibles, you know that sex was not our idea at the beginning. Sex is God's idea. God made sex, and he made it to be good. He blesses the sexual relationship between a husband and a wife. God does not turn his eyes away when a husband and wife have sex. He doesn't say, "Oh my goodness that is so disgusting." God puts his blessing on marital sex. Marital sex is a gift from God. It is designed to result in our satisfaction, our deep fulfillment. It is designed by God to be a way for us to give and to receive love. To know intimacy at the core level of our beings. And it is designed, of course, on occasion, to result in the birth of children, who are also a blessing from the Lord. The Bible treats sex and children as blessings, as gifts from God.

Sadly, tragically, for many of us, God's great gifts become instruments of cursing and wounding. I heard one poor woman say, "I wish that sex was one gift that God would have kept to himself." This wonderful treasure of marital sex, this great gift, is a source perhaps of the greatest frustration, the greatest bondage, and the greatest hurt that most of us living in our day will experience in this life. If I were to ask for a hand count, and I certainly would not, but if I did ask for hand count of you married couples and said to you, "How many of you are right now experiencing a fully satisfying, fulfilling, joyful, sexual relationship with your spouse?" I know that less than half of you would be able to raise your hands. If I asked the question, "For how many of you is sex a continual source of frustration, a source of shame, for how many of you has sex been an instrument of hurt and great pain, wounding and bondage?" I believe more than half of you would say that far from being a great gift from God, sex has often been in your life a source of great frustration or wounding or shame.

And that is the truth, if you are married or single. Marriage doesn't heal sexual frustrations. It may actually increase the frustrations. Many married people and many

Christian married people live with so much less than a fully satisfying, mutually fulfilling sexual relationship with their spouse. They have adjusted their expectations downward and said, "This is an area that we will never get right. It is always going to be broken and bad."

There is certainly some level of human frustration that we are going to live with. If you have little children, there will often be lots of interruptions. I don't know how many times Marlene and I were going to be romantic when one of the kids would call out for a drink of water. And every married couple has a story to tell about some moment of embarrassment. A number of years ago Marlene and I were going to be romantic and someone came knocking on the door of our apartment, ringing the bell. My attitude was, "Forget them, they'll go away." They were knocking, ringing and banging. Finally, Marlene made me get up and find out who they were. They had gone. The next day at church this couple came up to us and said, "It was very peculiar. Last night we came around your house, your car was there and there was a light on. We thought you were home, but we knocked but you didn't answer. Where were you?" Marlene turned red. I was a little embarrassed, I tried to evade their questions, but they kept pressing, "Where were you?" So I told them exactly what we were doing.

We live in such a sexually charged, sexually alive culture. I was sitting on the plane not too long ago next to a woman who was reading a woman's magazine. Without any embarrassment and sitting next to a stranger, she had the magazine wide open and in bold print there was an article about seven ways to have an office affair. Here she is just reading along as if she were reading *Reader's Digest* or *Tom Sawyer* – page after page about sexuality and affairs and tests about how to determine if your partner is cheating on you.

Marlene and I receive the *American Family Association Journal*. Every month it goes through TV programming and the utter drenching of our culture in meaningless sex. Not fulfilling, really great, mutually satisfying, loving, intimate, faithful marital sex, but dirty sex, confused sex, broken sex, sex that results in bondage and shame and guilt and hurt.

Here is what I want to do today. Set against the backdrop of the kingdom of God, God's desire to extend his rule and reign, to extend his government over everything, I want to talk today about becoming sexually free. That's my title. "Becoming Free from Sexual Bondage." Let's pray.

It is important to understand sexuality and our own sex lives against the backdrop of spiritual warfare. Those of us who are followers of Christ need to wake up to the terrible reality that whether we like it or not, we are in a spiritual war and this whole world is under the power of the evil one. I am not being an alarmist or super spiritual, this is just what the Bible teaches. All of our lives are set against this great reality of the clash of the kingdoms, the kingdom of God forcefully advancing, attempting to take ground back that has been lost to a rebel force led by a wicked king. The backdrop of your job, what you read in the newspaper, what is going on in the American government, what happens in your children's school, international relations between nations, the backdrop of the relationship that you have with your spouse or your ex-spouse or your boyfriend or girlfriend. And the background of your sexual life is spiritual warfare. We are living in a world that is at war. There is a great cosmic battle going on between God and Satan. Every molecule, every attitude, every choice that you make is being fought over

regularly. Every time you incline yourself this way or that way sexually, the government of God is either advancing or receding in your life. You are either gaining ground or giving ground to the kingdom of Satan every time you have sex.

Now, I know that we would all like to go on summer vacation from the war. But even on vacation you will find yourself experiencing spiritual warfare. It is there in the car you drive down with your kids. It is there in your parents' family that you visit. You don't escape the war even if you have lots of money. It is there in the hotel by the pool or on the beach, in the movie theater, at the amusement park. Spiritual warfare is simply the backdrop of life in this world until Jesus comes again. And when you begin to look at the world this way, through the lenses of spiritual warfare, it seems to me that things come into much sharper focus. Our choices become far more important. It is easier to become more urgent, more concerned, more serious about our moral choices when we realize that spiritual forces are at work, that we are at war and not at peace. We are willing to make greater sacrifices when we are at war. We use very different kinds of precautions and protections when we are at war than when we are at peace. You view your children differently in a time of war than you do in a time of peace. You pray differently when you realize that you or someone you love might be in danger.

I remember during the Gulf War our church joining together in prayer for protection and for safety for people from the church who went out to fight in the Gulf. You see this heightened level of prayer whenever there is some danger. Don't you see it in your own life? When you or a family member or someone you love, a friend is in danger, you pray differently. You don't sort of heap one up as you are thanking God for your food – just shooting up a lackadaisical, dribble-from-your-mouth sort of prayer when your child is lost or your parent is dying. It seems to me that things are taken far more seriously when you look at life against the backdrop of a spiritual war going on over your soul, over your kids' souls.

And when I begin to explore the link between my sexuality and possible demonization, sexual choices take on a whole different complexion. I have prayed for many, many people under demonic influence and in demonic bondage, so sexual sin has taken on a very different complexion for me. See, it is one thing to understand our sexual choices in isolation and say, "So what if you are disobedient to God or obedient. You can play loose with the truth. So what? We sin, we confess, we get cleansed, Jesus forgives. No big deal." But it is another thing to watch people drawn progressively under the power of Satan to the point that they lose the ability to make free choices.

On your overhead I have what I call the Continuum of Sin. A continuum is an uninterrupted sequence. Here is the sequence that occurs in a person's life in many areas, but certainly in the area of sexual sin. It begins with a thought. You will recall that when I talked about a multi-dimensional understanding of our sin, we talked about our flesh. Sin that arises from within us. We talked about the world, the impulse to sin that comes from outside of us. And we talked about evil supernaturalism, the tendency to sin that comes from above us. And so there is this continuum to sin beginning with a thought, moving from the thought to a choice, the repetition of a choice that becomes a habit, the continuation of a habit that results in a loss of control, a loss of freedom. That loss of freedom results in bondage and then total control of an area. So that in the areas of bondage and total control, we would say, "Here is where we see the evil supernaturalism, the takeover of the will by demonic forces."

Again, I don't know how you feel about it, but if you have ever prayed for someone who is demonized or if you find yourself in bondage and have lost control in an area, sin takes on a whole different complexion. It is one thing to view sin as "O, I can always confess and it is no big deal and Jesus always forgives." It is quite another thing to find yourself as a slave to sin, to have a continual sense of guilt and shame and uncleanness and feeling like I keep running in a cycle over and over and I can't escape.

Let me give you an analogy drawn from the therapeutic world of addiction. Do you have any understanding at all of what physiological addiction is all about? You know researchers have done studies of monkeys in a cage. If you have ever seen a film of a monkey who is hooked on heroin, it is one of the most tragic things you will ever see. That monkey will hit a lever thousands and thousands and thousands of times in a row until it kills itself to get another fix. Until you have seen someone who is an addict or until you feel yourself as an addict in some area, you have no idea of what is going on even physiologically and chemically in your brain. We will literally kill ourselves. We will commit marital suicide, spiritual suicide, and physical suicide to get another fix of what we are in bondage to.

Sometimes I think that it is not only that we need to take sin more seriously by putting it against the backdrop of spiritual warfare and demonization, I think that we take the goodness of God more seriously. When you realize that God's commandments and God's "Thou Shalt Nots" when he says stay away from this stuff or that practice, terminate this choice, don't open that door, don't go there – it is because God knows the horrible addictive, demonic, loss of control and the suicidal consequences of making the wrong moral choices. God is not trying to kill our joy or squeeze out all of our fun by telling us that it really makes a difference how we handle our sexuality. God just doesn't want us to become like monkeys in a cage hitting the lever over and over and being unable to stop until we kill ourselves. It is the goodness of God that puts limits on us so that we say "no" to pre-marital or extramarital sex, "no" to adultery, "no" to pornography.

As I move forward in this topic of drawing out the link between our sexual sins and potential demonization, I don't want to create a church that is looking for a demon under every rock. Or a church that believes that deliverance from evil spirits is the total answer to our sanctification, our growth as Christians and our growth in holiness. I just finished reading a wonderful book on spiritual warfare by Dr. Ed Murphy. I think we have it in the bookstore. It is a very big book called "The Handbook of Spiritual Warfare." Even though it is a large book, it is fairly straightforward reading. Dr. Murphy takes a balanced perspective. A lot of books on spiritual warfare go to the extreme theologically. They go beyond what the scriptures warrant. He not only has a very good strong biblical grid that he is working from, but lots of practical experience in dealing with the demonized.

Dr. Murphy wisely, I think, prescribes what he calls the 45-10-45 principle in dealing with the demonized, dealing with someone who is in bondage, someone who is experiencing a complete loss of control. He says that we need to approach such an individual with a 45-10-45 kind of ministry. 45% of our time we are going to spend in pre-deliverance counseling, speaking to the person about sin and bringing them to a clear understanding that their choices, their behavior, their thought processes, their attitudes are sin and are offenses to God and grieve the Holy Spirit. That there is something evil and wicked and wrong about their choices and thoughts. About 45% of

the time is just spent on dealing with the issue of sin and calling the person into a deep understanding of biblical repentance. Beginning to grieve over our sins and with mind, heart and will come against those sins.

And of course, if a person has been sinned against, about 45% of the time will be spent explaining the awfulness of the sin against the person and then teaching the person to use mind, heart and will to forgive the one who has offended and sinned against them. About 45% of our time is spend on the subject of sin and repentance and forgiveness.

And if we don't deal with the issues of sin, whether our own sins or sins against us, the wound is still going to be there for demonic forces to infect, and the person will never be set free, no matter how dramatic the deliverance is.

10% is spent dealing with deliverance. Speaking directly to demonic forces that would attach themselves to wills. Demonic spirits, in the case of sexual sins – demonic spirits of homosexuality, pornography, or adultery or invasion through sexual abuse.

And about 45% of our time is spent in post-deliverance counseling. In teaching the person how to walk free, to flee from immorality, to avoid certain places, to break off certain relationships, to get rid of certain magazines, to cut the cable on the TV Taking practical steps to build ourselves up through the Bible and learning about truth and how to do truth encounters.

45-10-45 – that is the kind of church that I want to see here in the Vineyard. We spend the same percentage of time dealing with the demonic that the Bible does. It is not the exclusive topic of the Bible. When it becomes the exclusive preoccupation or the exclusive answer for all of our problems, we are moving away from the Bible and getting unbalanced and immature. Many churches fall into that kind of error. But there is that 10%, there is that core in the scripture, and there must be that core in the church of recognition of demonic power that goes beyond pre-counseling and post-counseling. That goes beyond listening to tapes and reading books and discussion and improving your devotional life. There is a place in the Christian church and in Christian lives for confrontation, open, clear confrontation with demonic forces that have infiltrated, infected, put in bondage people's wills and their behavior.

Let's keep it in balance here in the church. 45-10-45. But lets remember that there is a "10." There is a reality to demonic power grabbing a hold of a person's will.

A few weeks ago I dealt with the issue of whether a person who was a follower of Christ, had the Holy Spirit living in them, could also be demonized. I am not going to repeat that material. If you are interested, you can pick up the tape titled "What Happens When a Demon Comes to Church." We see throughout the scriptures that sincere believers in God can through repeated sin, through wrong moral choices, open themselves up to becoming demonized. We see it in the life of King Saul. We see it in the life of that poor fellow in Mark 1, who was demonized. We see it in Judas who walked with Jesus for three years and in whom Satan entered. We see it in the case of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. There is biblical backdrop and a great biblical warrant to the notion that sincere Christians can also be demonized.

Certainly all of us read the scriptures through the lens of our personal experiences or our personal non-experiences. It is unavoidable. We all have a vantage point. What we see depends on where we stand. I come to the scriptures, come to life with a vantage point of having prayed for dozens and dozens of honest true believers – people

who had an orthodox confession of faith, who believed that God is a Trinity, Father, Son and Spirit – who have given their hearts to Jesus and who believed that He is the only payment for their sins, who have received him as their Savior and Sin-bearer and Lord. I have prayed for dozens of people like that, who have manifested demons. It certainly doesn't take very long for a person's theology to be revised concerning whether a demon can be in the life of a Christian when you pray for a Christian and actually see a demon manifest or a demon begins to talk to you. Trust me, friends, your worldview and theological perspective will be significantly altered the first time you pray for someone you know is a Christian and a demon begins to talk to you through them. Or they begin to hiss at you or fall down on the floor and begin to slither like a serpent.

God in his mercy wants to protect us from being infiltrated by demonic forces. He wants people to become free sexually and to become free spiritually. To be free. And so God through the scriptures tells us that there are a number of pathways, if you will, to our spirits, entry points. Doorways through which Satan can carve a road to your will. And one of the doorways that Satan can carve a road to your will and put his claws around your will, put his grip around your will, is the sexual doorway – wrong moral choices that you make in sex or wrong moral choices made against you.

What is the link? Why sex and demonization? What is the link-up biblically?

Certainly, one of the link-ups that you see biblically is that in the Bible evil spirits, demons, are actually called often "unclean spirits." In the New Testament they are not necessarily called evil spirits, but unclean spirits. For example in Mark 5 we read of a man who is naked and demonized, and it says that he has unclean spirits living in him. Jesus takes those unclean spirits and tells them to leave and as a picture of their uncleanness, they go into an unclean herd of pigs, pigs that are ritually unclean, and they go rushing off a cliff to the destruction of the pigs. All the animal rights people say, "Poor pigs." Forgetting about poor man who was completely in the clutches of these demons.

Apparently, Jesus does practice some form of speciesism in that he values people above pigs and hogs. It has always seemed interesting to me that evil spirits in the New Testament are often called unclean spirits. Because that is what they do to a person. They put a film over the person. What you observe in people who are repeatedly sexually sinning or have been repeatedly sexually sinned against is there is an uncleanness about them. There is a film over them. I am sure you have seen this, perhaps, at your workplace or at school or in the gym. But there are some folks who will joke about sexual things or talk about sexual things when there doesn't seem to be any particular stimulation or occasion for the sexual humor or sexual talk. But everything for this person has an unclean feel to it. Sometimes they will throw in a sexual joke or a sexual twist in an area that is completely not sexual. There is a film over their minds. It is appropriate that we call certain things dirty – dirty minds, dirty words. Unclean spirits are often behind unclean minds and unclean activities.

Biblically there is a link between what we do sexually and what happens to us spiritually. If you have a Bible, I want you to open up to Numbers 22. There is a classic illustration in Numbers 22, which connects our sexuality and our spiritual lives and the demonic. We are going to be looking at the story of Balaam in Numbers 22. But I want to begin in Numbers 21 and set the context for you of this story of Balaam.

In Numbers 21 the Israelites are on their way to the Promised Land. They are this huge army of people on the east side of the Jordan River. And they are marching from South to North on the east side of the Jordan where it says in Numbers 21:21 that they encounter Sihon, king of the Amorites. They said to Sihon, king of the Amorites, "Let us pass through your country. We will not turn aside into any field or vineyard, or drink water from any well. We will travel along the king's highway until we pass through your territory." They make a very reasonable request. Let us go through your territory. We won't touch anything. We won't eat anything. We won't drink anything. Just let us walk on the king's highway through your territory.

But instead Sihon comes out to meet them. It says in verse 23: "But Sihon would not let Israel pass through his territory. He mustered his entire army and marched out into the desert against Israel. When he reached Jahaz, he fought with Israel. Israel, however, put him to the sword and took over his land from the Arnon to the Jabbok..." Those are the two rivers that are now in modern Jordan. "...but only as far as the Ammonites, because their border was fortified. Israel captured all the cities of the Amorites and occupied them, including Heshbon and all its surrounding settlements."

Here this tremendous Israelite army meets the army of King Sihon and completely defeats it. At the end of chapter 21 Israel meets another king, King Og, who deserves to be put to the sword with a name like that. I mean, anyone with a name like Og sounds like a troll living under a bridge. They meet King Og of Bashan and defeat that army. And so they are coming. You can hear their marching feet. It is echoing in the hillsides. You can hear the hoofbeats of their animals. You can hear the Israelites shout. They are the invading army.

And so we pick up the story of Balaam in Numbers 22. It says:

"Then the Israelites traveled to the plains of Moab and camped along the Jordan across from Jericho. Now Balak son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites, and Moab was terrified because there were so many people. Indeed, Moab was filled with dread because of the Israelites. The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, 'This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field.'"

Balak, who was king of Moab, realized that he can't militarily defeat the Israelites. So he decides to take a spiritual route in defeating Israel. He knew he couldn't meet them man for man. He can't hope to fight against them on the physical plain. His army is no match. So he decides to attack spiritually. Maybe he can unleash spiritual opposition that will wipe them out.

So it says in Numbers 22:

"So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the River, in his native land. Balak said, 'A people has come out on Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me. Now come and put a curse of these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the country. For I know that those you bless are blessed, and those you curse are cursed.'"

So Balak is in a panic. And he contacts this pagan seer, in Hebrew it is a *baru*, a person who is a diviner. Balaam apparently works for hire. He is one of those guys who is a palm reader down on High Street who will tell you your fortune for a price. There were these diviners, these seers, *barus*, around the ancient world. Some of them



were for real. They weren't just these fakey, palm readers who tell you generalized things. There are real pagan prophets who really do receive supernatural revelation only not from God. They get supernatural revelation and they have supernatural power from the evil one.

I talked with one of the pastors here who, just this week, told me that one his wife's relatives had gone out, against God's will, and met this Native American seer. As this person drove up to the Native American seer's door, who was in touch with demonic power, the seer came out of the house and called the person by name – first and last name, knew who they were. There was no appointment set. There was nobody who was acting as an intermediary. This person was acting by demonic revelation and told the individual as they got out of the car what the problem was that they were seeking help for. It was absolutely accurate down to the details. There was an unleashing of demonic spiritual power for them.

Balaam was, apparently, like that. He was operating with great power and great authority. Balaam is even written about outside of the Bible. Archeologists have found an Assyrian inscription that mentions Balaam and his activities. This guy had quite a reputation.

Now for two chapters Balaam tries to put a curse on the people of Israel. He tries to work on behalf of Balak and unleash spiritual power against the Israelites. He can't, and Balaam learns an important lesson that so long as the people of God are faithful to the Lord no power can defeat them. No military power can defeat them. No spiritual power can defeat them. So long as God is with his people and the people of God are loyal to their God, so long as God's people are faithful to God, faithful to the covenant of God, so long as they walk in obedience and in the light, there is no power on earth that can beat them – none. And that is what Balaam says in Numbers 23: 21. Listen to this. This is a key promise in the Bible. You might want to underline it for yourself.

"No misfortune is seen in Jacob, no misery observed in Israel. The Lord their God is with them; the shout of the King is among them. God brought them out of Egypt; they have the strength of a wild ox. There is no sorcery against Jacob, no divination against Israel. It will now be said of Jacob and of Israel, 'See what God has done.'"

There are many people in the church who are concerned about the occult and sorcery and witchcraft. As long as the church of God is faithful to God, as long as we are loyal, no sorcery, no witchcraft, no divination will ultimately stop us. Jesus said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it so long as the church is with God and loyal to God."

Again, the principle that Balaam was expressing Numbers 23 is this: As long as God's people are faithful to their God, as long as they are loyal, then God will not allow his people to be defeated or ultimately cursed.

But what happens if God's people can be drawn aside from loyalty to their God? What happens if God's people decide to turn from the light and begin to walk in darkness? What happens if God's people begin to break the covenant that they have with God and they become faithless?

In such a case God withdraws his protection and his hand of blessings. God allows his people to be defeated. So Balaam understands that if he can somehow seduce the people of Israel, if he can draw them into disobedience, then they lose their protection from God and are open to be demonically invaded.

You remember those 1950s 1960s Cold War spy movies where the Russian agent is seeking to get a secret from an American military officer or a scientist. So long as the American remains true and faithful to their moral code, they won't betray their own government and commit treason. What the Russian spy will attempt to do is to seduce the American often using a beautiful woman. They realize that if they can get this American scientist or governmental official in a compromising position they can seduce them and open them up to blackmail them to turn over secrets.

So Balaam uses the oldest form of trickery in the world. He uses the seduction of sex to draw the Israelites away from loyalty to God into false worship. Here is what we read in Numbers 25:

"While Israel was staying in Shittim, the men began to indulge in sexual immorality with Moabite women, who invited them to the sacrifices to their gods. The people ate and bowed down before these gods. So Israel joined in worshiping the Baal of Peor. And the Lord's anger burned against them."

The rest of chapter 25 we read about a great plague that the Lord sends against Israel. And in verse 9 it says, "24,000 died in the plague."

And then we read of a bloody killing of an Israelite man, and in the end of chapter 25 you say, "How do I know that Balaam is the one who came up with this master plan to sexually seduce Israel so that he could bring a curse on them?" The book of Numbers tells us that. In Numbers 31:15-16, Moses asked:

"Have you allowed all the women to live?" he asked them. "They were the ones who followed Balaam's advice and were the means of turning the Israelites away from the Lord in what happened at Peor, so that a plague struck the Lord's people."

The bottom line is this, friends, Satan has no power over us unless we willingly give it to him through some sin we commit or some traumatic sin that has been committed against us. But unless we or our families collaborate and go along with the plan, the enemy cannot defeat God's people. In the Old Testament God laid out the path of blessing and the path of curses. There were covenant blessings that came through obedience to God, and then there were covenant curses that came through disobedience. We read about the covenant blessings and curses in Leviticus 28. We read about them at the end of Deuteronomy. Blessing generally comes through obedience; cursing through disobedience. The law in the Old Testament prescribed the curses. They all began with the letter D – death, disease, drought, dearth, danger, destruction, defeat, deportation, destitution, and disgrace.

Here is the deal. As we walk in continual disobedience and disloyalty to God, the curses of the covenant come upon us. In the New Testament it is revealed that one of the curses is demonization.

Let me draw another link-up in your mind and that is the link between immorality and idolatry. Immoral sex leads to idolatrous worship; idolatrous worship leads to immoral sex. I haven't the time to go through all of the Old Testament false religions, but the false religions that were practiced that God told the people to avoid were all wrapped up not only in false worship, but corrupted sexuality. In fact, in the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *zanah* means either prostitution or apostasy. Lots of times you can't tell if the adultery the Israelites were committing was spiritual or physical.

There was a Canaanite deity named Baal. If you don't like the Hebrew pronunciation you can use the Americanized Baal. When the Israelites came out of

Egypt they were immediately confronted with the Canaanite fertility religion in which people worshiped this God Baal and the goddess Ashera. Baal was the Canaanite storm God, the God of lightening and thunder, but he was also the male God of sex. Archeologists have found statues to Baal that are statues with large phallic organs. And the worship of Baal involved male temple prostitutes. The Canaanites worshiped Baal by engaging in homosexual acts with male temple prostitutes and with female temple prostitutes. Men would give their seed to a homosexual recipient or a female recipient and that was intended to be a gift to the Baal and so Baal would fertilize the land with rain. Sex was tied to false worship.

And in the case of Ashera, the female goddess, there were female prostitutes. In other countries the goddess took on the name Ishtar, Astarte, Venus, Aphrodite. It is all the same goddess. As they had sex with these prostitutes, people would be opening themselves up to spirits, to demons behind the prostitutes – homosexual spirits, heterosexual spirits. Throughout the Bible there is a link between what we do sexually and what happens to us spiritually. As you connect with a person, you connect not only with that person, but also to what is behind that person spiritually. And if what is behind that person spiritually is not God, because God is not blessing this sexual union since it is not happening in the context of marriage, what is behind that person is the enemy, then you are opening yourself up not only sexually, but spiritually. People don't understand that demonic spiritual bondage often can result from sexual sin or sexual abuse.

Friends, I am telling you, you can see this link-up between false religion and distorted sexuality in all the world's religions. Go to a Hindu temple and look at the walls. They are filled with pornographic images. In Tantric Buddhism you find the most extreme sexual practices – sex with demons and opening up one's body to the invitation of sex with demonic spirits. Read about Mormonism – what Mormons really believe and what they really practice in the area of sex and sexuality. The Mormon view of heaven is continual sex between men and a thousand wives. Men having hundreds of goddess wives and impregnating them. Read the Muslim view of heaven straight out of the Koran and you will see the most extreme and gross views of women and sexuality.

A person gets opened up sexually. They turn from God and they become opened up to idolatry.

A person turns from God and they get opened up morally. Immorality in the Bible leads to idolatry and idolatry leads to immorality. That is what Romans 1 says. "Though they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish minds were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of immortal God for images made to look like mortal men, and birds, animals and reptiles."

Idolatry – what does it lead to? Immorality. And in Romans 1 the reverse order is the case. As in the temptation of Balaam, immorality leads to idolatry.

And I think that is what is happening in modern America right now. We are seduced. We are drawn aside to illegal sex. We open up our bodies and offer our bodies. We have sexual relationships outside the covenant that God has given, outside of marriage. And when we open up our bodies and give our bodies, we are opening them up and offering our spirits to whatever lies behind this person. We open our eyes and our imaginations to these spirits of Baal and Ashera – to whatever spirits are behind

pornographic movies. We handle and touch and fantasize about and fondle and lay hold of other bodies and images. But behind those bodies and images are demonic powers. And then we shake our heads in distress about why we are always in distress, about why we are always defeated and feel in bondage, about why we are always depressed. We wonder why our kids have wandered from God. We come up with theologies about why there is little presence of God in the church and little presence of God in our lives and little healing. And we have these elaborate explanations about how God doesn't work today the same way he used to work. The Western church and the American church is in profound spiritual bondage because of its sexual sin and it won't confess it and acknowledge it.

But I think this is a day of liberation. It is a day of exposure. It is a day of God bringing to the surface what has been hidden for a long time. God wants to break this link between spiritual adultery against him and physical adultery. He wants to cut this link. He wants to cut this thing that is going on in our lives that connects faithlessness to our Lord and faithlessness to our marital partners or our future marital partners. He wants to shut the door generationally so that we don't bring into our homes and family line sexual demons, that we don't inflict those on our children – our sons and daughters.

Let me finish by turning to 1 Corinthians 6 and a few final thoughts about this whole issue of sexuality and demonization so that we can be free. 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 is a treatise regarding how to get free of sexual bondage. In 1 Corinthians 6:12 the apostle Paul is quoting from the Corinthians and in verse 12, quoting from them he says:

"Everything is permissible for me—but not everything is beneficial. 'Everything is permissible for me' – but I will not be mastered by anything."

There is a lie that Satan throws into our minds and that is "Well, we are free in Christ. Jesus forgives us. We are safe and secure. Therefore, I am free to do whatever I want even sexually." The Corinthians are involved in all kinds of illicit sexual activity – sex outside the bound and will of God, sex outside of heterosexual marriage, they are involved in fornication, they are involved in adultery, they are involved in homosexuality, they are involved in incest. And they quote Paul back to him and say, "Paul, aren't you the one who taught us our liberty in Jesus? You taught us not to be legalistic or uptight." I have heard Christians argue this way sexually, "Well, we aren't legalistic. We can look at certain things and watch certain movies. We can engage in certain sexual practices even outside of marriage because we are not under the law, we are under grace. Don't be so legalistic as to remind me about of God's will. Don't be so legalistic to warn me about the demonic dangers of illicit sexual practices."

Paul is a brilliant debater. He is not the kind of person you would want to debate with. He turns the argument of freedom around and says, "Well, maybe everything is permissible for me, but I will not be mastered by anything." In other words, if you are free, if you are really free, you ought to be free to stop doing certain things sexually. I mean if you really love freedom, then you love freedom enough to not be mastered by certain sexual practices.

Are you mastered right now sexually by pornography? Are you mastered by an affair? Are you mastered by homosexual fantasies or practices? Can you stop having sex with your boyfriend or girlfriend until you get married so your relationship will have God's blessing, not Satan's curse?

You talk to someone who is an alcoholic or addicted to cigarettes, or to pornography and the person's response may be in denial of their addiction, "Hey, I am not an addict. I am not an alcoholic. I just choose to drink every night and sometimes during the day until I am drunk."

"Well, if you aren't an addict, if you are really free, can you stop drinking for a week?"

If you are mastered, then you are not free as you claim to be. You are a slave. The only kind of liberty that exists is liberty within the will of God. Liberty to be able to say "no" to certain things. Outside the will of God we are dominated and enslaved by Satan. And then Satan comes along with a lie that says, "Well sex just affects my body. It is just my body. It is just physical. It doesn't affect me spiritually."

1 Corinthians 6: 13-14 reads:

"Food for the stomach and the stomach for food'—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also."

The Corinthians were saying that what they were talking about with sex was that it was just the body. It is just like food. Sex and food are the same. You eat, you enjoy your meal, you wipe your mouth and it is gone. You have sex, you get up from bed, it hasn't affected you, you take a shower and wash yourself off, you're clean and you're okay.

People say that today, "What difference does it make if I have sex with my boyfriend or girlfriend even if I am not married? What difference does it make if I have 10 boyfriends or girlfriends? I can come to church and lift my hands. I have taken a shower. It has all washed off. Those things don't affect me spiritually."

What Paul is driving at when he says the body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord and by his power God raised him from the dead, is he is trying to get us to understand a true view of the body. The Corinthians were working with a Greek view of the body, which was dualistic and by dualism I mean the Greek view of the body was the same view we would have of a car. A car is just a vehicle to get us around. We are not the car. I am not my Toyota. My Toyota is not me. It is just a vehicle that gets me around. That was the Greek view of the body. I am not my body, my body is not me. My body is just a vehicle that transports the real me around. The real me is my soul. So if I misuse my body it is like misusing my car. I can have lots of garbage in my Toyota. I can throw my McDonald's wrappers in the back, but it doesn't affect me, Rich. I can jump out of the car and still be the real me.

That is the dualistic view. What happens to my body doesn't affect me. But Paul is working from a biblical view, a Jewish view, and not a Greek view. He is saying that you and your body are one. It is not just a vehicle; you and your body are inextricably intertwined. You either live in this body in this world, or if you are a believer, you live in a resurrected body in the next world. You can't just wash your body off in the shower and be clean. Only the blood of Jesus can wash away the stain that occurs when you sexually sin against your body and your soul.

Some people say, "Well I can have sex without becoming demonically invaded. I can have sex and still be free." Paul pushes the argument forward and says, "Don't you understand the purpose of sex?" Verse 15 says, "Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one

with her in body? For it is said, 'The two will become one flesh.' But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit."

When you use something for a purpose for which it was never intended, you end up breaking the thing. I can use my coffee cup to drive a nail, but what I will probably end up doing is crack the coffee cup. I may drive the nail into the wall, but I will crack the cup. I will ruin the cup. When we use sex wrongly, when sex is not an act of love within the bounds of heterosexual marriage, what we end up doing is shattering ourselves. It is like trying to drive a nail with a coffee cup. We end up lonelier and emptier than we were before we had that sexual act. We end up more broken, more unfulfilled, more degraded. Sex is a big deal. That is what Paul is getting at in verse 18 when he says:

"Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body."

Lots of people argue for illicit sex by saying, "Hey, there are lots of other sins. I don't beat my kids. I am not a racist. I don't smoke. I don't use drugs. So what if I have a little sex on the side. So what? So what if I sleep with my boyfriend or girlfriend? We are adults."

Your body is the boundary of your spirit. When you violate your body, you are opening the boundary and allowing the demonic to invade your spirit. Whatever else Paul means, he is certainly saying that sexual sin occupies a unique place in the life of a Christian. Somehow other sins don't grip us the way sexual sin does. I don't fully understand it. The commentaries here are fairly weak. But I think that God protects our spirits by the body. And I think that when our bodies are invaded, we are opened up demonically to unclean spirits.

Here is the last argument: "I am my own boss." Paul says in verses 19-20, no, God is the boss, he owns you - "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body."

If you claim to be a Christian, you have given up the ownership of your life. Not only on Sunday morning from 9:30 to 11:00. You have not only given up the ownership of a few percent of your income. If you are a Christian, what that means is that you have transferred ownership to God.

For some of us we really have not given ownership of our minds, our hearts or our bodies to God in a clear way. We have not said to God, "God, here are my hands, my eyes, my sexual organs, here are my fantasies, my thoughts, my practices, here is my boyfriend or my spouse. I give you my body again."

God is the owner. God wants you to be free from sexual bondage. Let's pray.