



Temptation-Part 2

Curbing Your Appetites

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Well, near the week's end, I was reading about in the news this huge Coachella Music Festival that's going on there in the desert. And it was an article about the need for crowd control. They had apparently 85,000 people there at this huge concert, and they had all these bands coming through last year. And it was all about, you know, the difficulty of keeping that crowd managed. And I thought, well, this isn't a revolt, it's not a protest, it's not a planned insurrection—it's just a concert, you know. But you know how those things go.

All you had to do was read the paper earlier in the week on Monday in Kentucky—where you wouldn't think they'd do this kind of thing—when their Cardinals won the NCAA Basketball Championship, things went crazy in the streets. Much smaller crowd, but a lot of damage there, a lot of crazy things going on, which took my mind back to 2010 when the Lakers beat the Celtics in game seven of the NBA Finals. Remember that? And things went crazy. I mean, burning cars, flipping them upside down, furniture through windows, things set ablaze, rocks being thrown. And I thought, well, what if they had lost? I mean, this... I don't, you know, I don't get it. But I guess I do get it because I read about it every week—there's big crowds, and when they gather together, there's this danger. And when everybody's there Congress can quickly get out of control. It doesn't take much.

Now sometimes big crowds gather and everything's just fine. But often it doesn't work out that way. And just like dominoes, it seems just a little provocation starts to snowball, and it becomes this unstoppable, you know, mass of direction. And it's weird because each individual person—you think this is odd—here they are, doing things that they would never do by themselves. But given the kind of the crowd dynamic, these individuals mysteriously get whipped into a frenzy and start doing things that are horribly destructive.

That image of the difficulty of controlling a crowd might be a good way for you and I to begin to think about our own lives. I mean, our lives are a microcosm of that crowd dynamic. We have within us, the Bible teaches us, a crowd of desires and passions. Now, a lot of times things go just fine. Everything's in check and there's no problems. But it doesn't take much to get that snowball rolling, those dominoes falling, where our passions seem to join together in this river of momentum that gets them, you know, as some unstoppable force toward something that ends up, you know, flipping cars and throwing rocks and broken windows and all the rest—as you tie those images together—destructive things.

That's an image that is helpful, I believe, for us as Christians. Now if you're a non-Christian, I have no hope for you. Really, I'm sorry. The Bible says that your passions—and I know you've got rules,



and you've got a conscience that tells you when you're wrong—but the Bible says there's really no internal control that will mitigate that when it gets going. Jesus liked to say you're a slave to sin. I mean, you're just a victim in this because you, you don't have any of that ability to stop.

But for Christians—I'm talking to Christians, I hope, here this morning, most of you at least—there is this new dynamic, this new element. The Bible says, first of all, God changes us. We quote it all the time: the Old Testament looked forward to the New Covenant times, New Testament times, when our hearts would be changed. When we have this new creation within us; we're not who we used to be. And then not only that, we get the Spirit of God who dwells in us. The Holy One of God now is convicting more than a conscience; there's this empowerment to be able to curtail the passions of the flesh.

Now you think, well, that's good, you know, the Mounted Police have arrived, and it's all going to be fine. But it's not that way. As you know, if you've been a Christian for a while, you figure out that sometimes it just exacerbates the conflict. I mean, it's one thing when the fox is watching the henhouse and you, as a non-Christian, did what you could get away with. But now as a Christian, you recognize there's a real passion to constrain this kind of riotous development of your passions, and the conflict is there. And I recognize that and you recognize that and we live through that.

But the Bible says now it is possible, and there are things that God can do through us that will allow us to see those passions controlled so they don't reach that point. Now, the amazing thought—just to take a little pause in that line of thinking—is just something seemingly unrelated, and that is that God, in the second person of the Godhead, chose to take on humanity, to be encased—now think of this—in a body of passions, this crowd of desires. And by that, I mean he had the same human desires that we have that easily get kind of whipped up and taken into a direction they shouldn't go, a destructive direction. I mean, he had the human desire for rest, for comfort, for food, for gratification, for significance, for acceptance—for all the things that we have that end up being the catalyst for something very destructive in our lives—he had all of those.

And then, as we deal with all the time, arriving in chapter four of Luke is the rabble rouser, the troublemaker, the instigator, the one called the tempter, the devil, Satan. He comes and now takes those passions, tries to capitalize on those, and move Christ to a place of rebellion, to be able to give in to those desires.

Now, of course, if you were with us last week—and really you need to be because all of these sermons fit together—if you missed that, you need to hear it, because what we learned last week is that when Christ went into the wilderness, not as a victim, but led by the Holy Spirit, he went to conquer the problem of sin as the second Adam. That's where we left chapter three. And he did for us what we did not do, what Adam didn't do, and every failure that we've had was made victorious



in his temptations in the desert. And then there's great safety and security for us. We have that sense that because of Christ's victory over sin, I can now be accounted as righteous before God—that's called justification, critically important.

But we touched on briefly where we would go in the rest of this series, and this is part two—we've got two more to go. We're now going to take up Christ as an example, as the Bible says we should. First John said, "If you claim to be in Christ, you ought to walk as he walked." Or to put it in the mindset of this passage, you have to learn to fight the way that he fought in being able to keep these passions in check, to take our body, this crowd of desires, and make sure that they don't rise out of control, that they don't lead the way into transgression—super important.

So for us, we want to take what we see here—and the three sins or temptations to sin, I should say, in Luke chapter four—take them one at a time, very carefully, very slowly, and just contemplate the reality of each of these in our own lives. And while on the surface it may seem like, well, this is a completely unique temptation to Christ, they have very clear connections to our life. And if we can learn what Christ is demonstrating for us in this passage, we can live with, I hope, a lot more success.

Because nothing would be worse, by the way, for you to think, "This isn't a problem for me." If you're a new Christian, you think, "Well, man, I've been making progress in sanctification—my old life's gone, new things have come." Listen, there's nothing worse than you underestimating the riotous potential of your fleshly desires. Nothing worse than that. As a matter of fact, here's how Paul said it to the Corinthians: if you think you stand, you better take heed lest you... it's going to happen—you're vulnerable if you just think that you're not vulnerable. If you think you've got your crowd of passions or desires in check, and that they would never do that in your life, you better take heed lest they start flipping cars.

Because that, unfortunately—maybe you don't see as much of it—but ask any of the pastors on staff or pastors anywhere. I mean, we see a constant stream of people who sit here seeming very together, making progress in the Christian life, and then these passions in their lives lead them into a kind of corruptive and destructive period or chapter of their lives where they're in our offices, head in hands, just weeping over the things that have taken place that they never thought were possible in their Christian life. So be warned. And let us go into this passage with, I hope, a teachable attitude, saying, let's see what we can learn from this text.

Let's read it afresh just to get a little bit of the context—we're only going to look at the second half of verse 2 through 4 that's printed there on your worksheet—but for just the setting again, let's look at verse number 1, as it says, "Jesus," Luke 4:1, "full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan"—that's where he was baptized—"led by the Spirit in the wilderness for 40 days, being



tempted by the devil.” That set it up. We looked at that briefly last week. Middle of verse 2, Luke 4:2: “He ate nothing during those days, and when they were ended, he was hungry.” Now he’s being tempted the whole time. At the end of that time, though, now he’s feeling the pangs of hunger—which of course you feel early on—but if you’ve done any fasting at all (this is extreme fasting, I understand), there’s that period you get in the groove and for days you can feel like you don’t even have that hunger pain anymore. But at this particular point, he’d reached a severe limit, and he’s starving.

Verse 3: here comes the instigator, the rabble rouser, the one who wants to capitalize on that very natural desire for food and turn it into sin. Look at how he does this. He starts with this: “If you’re the Son of God,” which—remember—that was the voice that was heard at the baptism: “This is my Son, whom I love.” I mean, there’s that clear affirmation—“the Son of God.” “Hey, if that’s the case,” you can see the insidious setup for this, “then command this stone to become bread,” which on the surface is maybe even hard to detect—we’ll get into this in a minute—what’s wrong with that? You got the power to make bread out of rocks and you’re hungry? Why not do it? I mean, where would I write that sin? Where’s the verse on not turning rocks into bread?

Verse 4: Jesus answers and says—here’s the verse as it relates to this; we’ll untangle it in a minute—he says, in quoting Deuteronomy 8, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’” A lot to understand here. But let’s just start very slowly, one element at a time, at the bottom of verse 2, when it says “He ate nothing during those days, and when they were ended, he was hungry.” Let’s just start at the on-ramp to temptation. In other words, here’s where Satan shows up and says, “I’m going to capitalize on this. I’m going to start here.” And that’s a good place for us to recognize there’s danger, which doesn’t seem dangerous, because what’s wrong with being hungry when you haven’t eaten?

Let’s put it this way—number one on your outline, I hope you jot these things down (there is an outline there, if you didn’t find it already in your worship packet): jot down this number one—We need to expect good desires to be hijacked. We need to expect that good, normal, natural desires and appetites of our lives—as basic as being hungry or wanting companionship or wanting to have significance at work or wanting acceptance in your social circles—all of those very natural, good desires are going to be exploited and incited by the enemy to hijack you and take you into a place of transgression. That’s where Satan starts. Because really, is it any temptation for you to do things that you have no desire for? Of course not. Satan is always going to start to get you off the track of God’s will by taking something that you want in your humanity—your desires, I mean, that’s the category we’re looking at today—our appetites.

When we want satisfaction in some area of our lives, we need to recognize—and here’s the danger—when we don’t recognize it, we start to say, “Well, of course I should fulfill this, because it’s a natural, decent, if not good (at least a neutral) desire of being a human being. What’s wrong



with eating when you're hungry? What's wrong with getting fulfillment when you have that craving?" That's where it all starts.

Now think about it: if you go through the Bible and you look at the things that the Bible warns us against—over and over and over again—"Here are the big sins, and here are the things that really will corrupt your life. Here are the things that are so damaging to you that if you get involved with them, it's going to create all kinds of reverberating negative effects in your life"—all those sins, they all start with very basic desire.

Let's just go through a few. Our desire for significance—God created us to have that significance, to be created in the image of God, to have a role to play, to have work to do—that so easily, as it was even in Satan's own heart, gets parlayed into the sin of pride. Think of that. Nothing wrong with having an important role in the world, to do something significant, to make your mark, to do what God has created you to do. But it's so easily contorted, twisted, incited to cross the line from a good day's work and feeling decent about what we've done to being prideful, inflated, egotistical.

We all desire to rest. God created our bodies to need it—every night you go to sleep. And after a long week of work, you need a day off; you need some rest. Nothing wrong with that, that desire to rest. It's built in, and we can sit down and take a nap or relax or chill out and say, "Well, this is good. This is how I'm created. Of course I've got to do this, I need this." But Satan so easily takes something like that and can parlay it in many directions. I mean, the most classic one is just being lazy—taking the Christian work ethic and blowing off what we need to do, shirking our responsibilities in areas of life because we are, as the Bible puts it, sluggards—there's a good word; don't want to be called that—to be slothful.

We all want justice. We want what's right; we want the right thing done. And in a world where things are done wrong all the time—particularly when the wrong is done against us—it incites a kind of what we call righteous indignation. But how quickly the righteous indignation turns into outbursts of anger that do nothing positive for the cause of God. And now it becomes a destructive riot of emotions that lash out. It starts with, "That's not right; it needs to be right; that frustrates me and upsets me," but how easily that desire for justice and things being right turns into the destructive sin of anger.

Our desire for food can go in a lot of different directions—as it does in this text—but I mean, the most common one, at least as we think through the Bible's words of sin that can dominate lives: the Bible says your desire to eat can turn into the sin of gluttony. The desire for comfort—I mean, of course, I would like a comfortable home to live in and comfortable clothes and a comfortable mode of transportation. I mean, that's a natural desire to want comfort in my life; I don't want more pain.



And that can easily be parlayed into a sin of greed—the Bible says materialism, opulence, luxury, hoarding things.

Our desire for acceptance—we'd like to fit into our social circles; we like to fit in at work; we like to fit into the office. We start doing all these lateral comparisons, and it's so easily parlayed by the enemy into the sin of envy, jealousy—that strife in our hearts that we're not measuring up like we want to.

Now, if you're a student of church history, you may have noticed what I've just done there. I've named—starting with the human desire, or what the church historically used to call—the seven deadly sins: greed, gluttony, laziness, lust, anger, envy, and pride. I guess I didn't even hit on lust. That's right in the middle of the list. We desire companionship; we desire physical connection with people; we desire—I mean, to put it more bluntly—the gratification of a sexual relationship. That's just human nature. So easily parlayed into adultery, immorality, lust, pornography—you name the sin, the shortcut to that satisfaction.

Now think through those. There's the seven deadly sins, as they call them—which, by the way, have fallen out of vogue; and no, we don't like to talk about sin anymore—but from the third and fourth century, parents were teaching their kids the destructive nature of greed, gluttony, laziness, lust, anger, envy, and pride. And if you let those things take root in your life, they'll take over. It's like a crowd out of control—the momentum of those things in your life will ruin your life. And all I'm trying to point out is you can look at that classic list—it's not in the Bible, but it's certainly a summary of the biblical problems, the big problems—and they all start with a very natural desire. And that's the danger. We can often write it off: "Well, of course I should have fulfillment in this area of my life. That's the way I'm designed. That's the way I'm wired. That's the way I seek to find fulfillment."

Jot this down—we won't take time to turn there, because I want to look at several passages this morning—but this is a classic text, which I think I also quoted last week: 1 Peter 2:11. 1 Peter 2:11—here's the way we need to view these desires, ready to riot. The text puts it this way: we are to be careful with these passions of the flesh. They're built into who we are; they wage war against your soul—remember that passage? They're warring. You have to sense this battle between your spirit—regenerate in Christ, with the empowerment of the Holy Spirit—and a body full of appetites that are ready, at a moment's notice, to be whipped into a real riotous war against what is right. Be careful; they're easily set off.

Now, throughout this series what I'll try to do, in looking at each one of these, is to give us some counterattack—to give us some kind of remedy for it. Now, to make the observation that good desires are going to be hijacked—how do we prevent that? What's a step that we can take to



manage that? Well, let me start with this one. In verse number 2 it shows Jesus fasting—he hasn't eaten anything for 40 days. Right? That's the terminology, or at least Luke's idiom, for fasting.

You don't get into fasts that last that long, right? I mean, they seem almost impossible—but even a day. And go on the internet, look at people that are talking about 25-day, a month-long, fast—you don't get to that place just by deciding not to eat for a while. This is a pattern of your life. It was the pattern of Jewish piety: if you wanted to be someone who was, you know, expressing your piety before God, there was something to this. Now, we don't often talk about it—perhaps we should—but it was something that was not only done in reaction to very dramatic or grievous events in your life, and it often was (somebody dies in your family, whatever—you don't eat for days on end). That's the kind of reactionary fasting. But a lot of this was strategic fasting.

And the strategic fasting of the Bible was—what I like to say, I like to put it this way—it helps people, pious people, godly people, let their desires know who's in charge. Basically, it takes the desires of our lives—in this case our appetite for food—and says, "Listen, every time you want to eat, I'm not going to feed you, because I want to make it clear that you're not going to be, to put it in terms of parenting, a spoiled brat."

I talked recently about Orange County parents—I know, I'm bagging on Orange County parents; I am one—but we've got to be careful not to be the quintessential Orange County parent. What did I say a few weeks ago? Don't give your kids everything they want, which I know draws hit the floor. We are such a thing. Why? Because the Oompa Loompas say you'll create a brat. You give your kids whatever they want, then they start—like the old version of that, right?—smacking their gum and acting like any whim that I have better be satisfied, it better be satisfied now. You give your Orange County kids everything they want every time they want it—they'll be screaming for a Tic Tac whenever they have an inkling for one, and they'll have a fit, throw a tantrum.

I mean, it's good for us—I know it seems counterintuitive—if we want to raise responsible children, to make sure that we don't give them everything, even when it's okay for them to have it. And there'd be nothing wrong with you having it—I'm just going to say no. Because, in reality, you need to learn to live with that kind of deprivation, knowing this: you don't get everything you want. Because there are some things that you do want that you shouldn't have, that you need to learn that self-control regarding—you need to learn that in things that aren't sinful.

Is it wrong to eat breakfast? No. Is it wrong to eat lunch? No. I can be a glutton if I'm having eight meals a day, but to have three meals a day—nothing wrong with that. But to say no to a few of those meals—this was the process of pious or godly fasting—was to let my passions know, "You're not going to be a spoiled brat. You're not going to get everything you want." And you know what



that does? It helps to prioritize things in my life. My appetites aren't king. My appetites aren't in charge.

Turn to this passage with me real quick. It's worth looking at—good to highlight—Philippians chapter 3. Paul is writing about false teachers, which often, if you study false teachers in the New Testament, he's always—not just Paul; Jude does it and Peter does it—pointing out some common characteristics of the false teachers. And one of them is their appetites are king. Their desires are spoiled brats. And they teach that. They teach that Christianity is all about you getting all your needs satisfied right now. And Paul puts it this way so dramatically.

Let's get some context—verse 17, Philippians 3:17: "Brothers, join in imitating me." Paul does that a lot because he's doing the best he can to set a good example of a lot of things—like when he wrote to the Thessalonians about lazy people in their midst, busybodies. He called them people that wouldn't earn their own bread. He says, "Watch my life," and he was working hard, extra hours, going the extra mile, working a couple jobs to make sure that he showed the template of a good Christian work ethic. "Now, join in following my example. Keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us," in a variety of ways, I'm sure he's implying here.

"For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of God." Their walk, their lifestyle, is not in keeping with Christ. It's the opposite. It's contradictory; it's antithetical to what Christ has told us to do and to be. Verse 19: they'll be punished for it; there is destruction. They're not real Christians; they're false teachers. Now, this is worth underlining—check this out: "their god"—capital G or small g? Small g—"their god," we're not talking about the God of the universe; we're talking about their master, the one that's in charge in their lives—"is their belly." This doesn't mean they're all gluttons and 300 pounds. This just means that—it typifies the rest of their appetites. As Peter and Jude talked about in terms of their insatiable desires—Peter talked about their eyes full of adultery, for instance. They just want satisfaction every way that they can get it. Their feelings are king. Their appetites and desires are king.

"Their belly is their god; they glory in their shame; they're not ashamed of it at all." Now underline this, because this helps define it in very practical terms—the last phrase of verse 19: "with minds set on earthly things." Here's the problem: in a world filled with people with their minds set on earthly things, you're supposed to be called out from the world, separate from the world. And by that I mean, you have a separate value system than the world has. The world's only concerned with "If it feels good, do it. If it's something that makes you happy, well, have at it. We certainly don't want to curtail your liberty and freedom to be who you want to be, and to be satisfied in every way." That's not the world that we're supposed to be echoing or responding to or imitating.



We're supposed to be recognizing that this world is not our home, that the real issues of what's important to God transcend this world. And when it comes to our sentient desires as human beings—things we want satisfied in our lives—we've got to reprioritize our lives. And to put it in the positive instead of the negative—in terms of “don't set your mind on earthly things”—how about putting it in the positive? You can put in the margin a passage I know you know, Matthew 6:33. After talking about how the Gentiles are running after all the things that they essentially want to fulfill their desires with—they're worried about what they're going to wear, where they're going to live, what they're going to eat—he says, “Don't you fret about those. Don't be anxious about those.” Here's how it ends in verse 33: “But seek first”—what?—“the kingdom and his righteousness.” There's the transcendent things. As Colossians 3 says, set your mind on things above.

There are things more important than whether or not you have a really nice house in Orange County. There are more important things than how much you weigh when you step on the scale in the morning. There are more important things than whether you're satisfied sexually in every way that you think you should be. There are way more important things about how comfortable your mode of transportation is. There are way more important things than that. They're transcendent things—things that matter to the kingdom, to righteousness.

He says, “If you would seek the kingdom—God's kingdom—and his righteousness, if you'd seek that first, then,” he says, “all those things the Gentiles are worried about, they'll be added unto you.” Now is this a method for me to get my yacht in the Dana Point Harbor? “Just seek the kingdom and I'll get what I really want.” No. It's about not really wanting those things. It's about changing my priorities to where it's not about that. Then what are people worried about? They're worried about having all their desires met. Well, if you're talking about the basic essentials of life, the Bible says God will take care of you to have what you need—to eat, you'll have a place to live, you'll have an income, you'll have a job—God will take care of you. You worry about different things; you worry about things that matter eternally. That's a shifting of priorities.

If we're going to start with the fact that Satan came on the scene to exploit a basic human desire, and Jesus is showing by the pattern of his fasting—he's making sure he's not catering to his appetites—then what we learn from that is: though I know that most sin in my life is going to start with a basic human desire, I've got to get to the place where I realize I've got to make my desires a whole lot less of a priority in a world, by the way, where every single commercial and every product that's sold is going to try to appeal to you having your sentient desires fulfilled. I've got to fight the system. I've got to not be a part of this world when it comes to that kind of value system.

Expect your good desires to be hijacked. That's where it starts. Satan comes on the scene, the devil, verse number 3—it's printed there on your worksheet—he says, “If you are the Son of God, now, God says he loves you—we all heard that at the baptism—but come on. If that's the case, then why



are you sitting here hungry? Why don't you get fulfillment? Command this stone to become bread. Command this stone to become bread now."

Never tempted to turn stones into bread? Because I tried when I was a kid—it didn't work. So not a temptation of mine. Christ is apparently tempted by this. What is the temptation? "You're hungry. You have the power to do this. Why don't you do it?"

Now, I don't want to get too complicated here, but I want to think about Christology. I want to think about who Christ is. I want to think about the incarnate second person of the Godhead. We touched on this last week, but in your minds you can go back to Philippians 2, where it says he emptied himself—that Greek word *kenosis*; we create a whole doctrine under that umbrella. What did that mean? Here's how we define it: when he lays aside—the independent exercise of his divine attributes. The emptying of himself was not only that he would be encased in a body of passions—a crowd of desires, those human desires—but in that mode he would not independently exercise his divinity, his divine attributes, his divine prerogatives. And that he continually states throughout his ministry. A classic example where he does it multiple times is John chapter 5. In John 5:19 he says, "I can't do anything independent of the Father." And that's a "can't" as in, "I can't because I won't." And he says it later—here, I wrote it down—verse 30: "I do not seek my own will, but the will of him who sent me." I don't do anything independent of the Father.

Now that, I'm saying, is a special period and chapter of the incarnate Son of God. What he did before the incarnation and what he did after the incarnation—though, I believe there's always, in the economy of Father and Son, the kind of submission—in the incarnate, humble state, the humanity of Christ was a kind of submission that was unique, where he was not going to do anything unless it was cued from the Father. Specifically, he showed—even in that humbled state of humanity—the kind of pattern that we ought to have with God: that God is going to be the one that I am so almost desperately dependent on for every decision that's made.

Now, if that's his pattern, and if he said, "I'm not doing anything without the cues of the Father," here's something very interesting. "I'm hungry; I need food." Here's something almost super insidious and almost gross to even think about: Satan comes on the scene and says, "I've got an idea—here's a cue for you: turn the rocks into bread." If he does, not only is he independently exercising his divine attributes (the miraculous events of his life—which is not, you know, very often; he does it several times), but he's now doing it not just in a self-serving way—because what's wrong with eating when you're hungry? Nothing wrong with that. It's not that he had some, you know, period of time he's got to fast and it's not over. That's not it. It's that he is now taking the cue not from the Father, but from the tempter—to do what? To fulfill his desire through the prerogative of divinity, which he's already stated—and is living by—"I'm not going to do this without the Father's cue. I'm not going to do that without the Father's leading." The Father was not leading him to turn rocks into bread. I mean, almost in the exact opposite—in stark contrast—Satan was suggesting it. "I'm certainly not going to take my cue from you." So the answer is no.



The temptation for Christ, then—if we put it in the form of a paradigm—here’s what Christ was doing: “I’m going to step outside of the will of the Father to do something that will immediately satisfy my desire.” Think this through: I’m going to step outside the will of the Father to satisfy my desire, not by the cues of the direction of the Father, but just by—(I mean, Satan wouldn’t even need to be there)—but just by the temptation of just saying, “You’re hungry; meet the need.”

How’s that now transferable? Here’s how it’s transferable: because you and I, every day, have human desires. We have an opportunity to step outside the will of the Father—not because we’re the Son of God, not because we can do anything miraculous and turn anything miraculously into food or any other means of human satisfaction—but because God has set up a paradigm for us in terms of what we can and cannot do to fulfill those desires. If I’m hungry, I can’t just go and steal my lunch. If I need a comfortable mode of transportation, I can’t steal your car from the parking lot. If I have desires, they have to be met within the framework of what God said is right, for a lot of reasons—and most of the time, 90% of the time, because those things are the right way, the best way, the non-damaging way to fulfill my desire.

So sin for me that’s parallel to what’s going on here is that I just want the satisfaction now, outside of the direction, the parameters, of God’s will. I put it this way—well, there’s a lot to say—this, number two on your outline: We need to be aware of shortcuts to satisfaction. Beware of shortcuts to satisfaction. There’s a way I can get my desires met that end-run around the path that God has laid out in his Word. And whatever that is, I need to say, “Wait a minute—that’s not acceptable.”

Illustrate it with a real stupid illustration—are you ready? You and I are going to go up to your cabin in Big Bear—your family, my family, whatever—we go up there, and it’s really cold up there. We get there, I don’t know, nine o’clock, eight o’clock at night—we haven’t had dinner. So we’re going to fix a big dinner; we’re all going to sit down at this dining table that you’ve got. Now it’s a rustic cabin—you have no central air; all we have is a big fireplace over there in the corner of the living room, which is across from where we are. We’re all the way on the other side of the cabin where the table is. Now we’re hungry, we’re going to sit down, we’re going to eat, we’re going to do all that. And you say, “Well, we need to start a fire, Mike, in the fireplace. The wood’s outside—go get it and start a fire in the fireplace, and that’ll warm us eventually over here in the dining room.”

And I say, as I’m going to collect the firewood to myself, “It sure would be nice if we got warmed up a lot faster than that—wouldn’t it be great?” I’m thinking now in my imagination: if I started a fire right next to the dining room table, maybe by my chair, that way my freezing cold hands and my numb fingers—I can warm up real quickly as I eat the dinner that’s prepared here. And I can have my nice little glowing fire here; it’ll warm me up immediately—that’ll be great.

You're thinking, "Not a good idea." Number one: it's my house; there's a place for the fire. It will do its job; you're going to have to wait, though, for that heat to get to the place that satisfies you and your need for warmth. You're going to have to give it some time, but it's the right place for the fire to be.

That's the picture of what's going on with God. God is saying this—usually because it's best for us—and he knows the damage of taking something that is satisfying to the human nature and human desire and doing it outside of the parameters. Here's an example: marriage. You have a desire; I have a desire—human beings as beings of needing intimacy and contact and all that—we have a sexual desire. That desire God has got a fireplace for—he's got a parameter for. It's called marriage. That's what it is. I mean, I can teach this to the kids, I suppose, down the hall. Listen, for you as the hormones are raging through your pulsating, hormone-laced bloodstream—you want to have sex. Now, here's the problem, though: God says that's a damaging place to start the fire. That would not be good. There's ramifications for that. And even if there wasn't—don't cast off the fatherhood of God or the lordship of Christ by doing it your way. It could be like the tree in the garden—maybe there's nothing wrong, nothing poison about it. It's just that God said, "No." So let's let God be God in your sexual life, kids. And here's the deal: you need to put that off. Sex for you needs to be—the fulfillment for that needs to be found in marriage. And you've got to finish junior high first at least. Right? So you're going to have to wait—sorry. (It's about... I don't know who you thought I was speaking to.)

You've got to wait for the satisfaction, the warmth of that, to where you're sure to have this done in the right context. Fulfillment out of context—the shortcut to that—is prohibited; it's wrong; it's sinful.

Let me—maybe this will help, because that didn't feel like it helped a lot—James chapter 1. Here's something that we often do because we find great verses, especially in the book of James; it's almost proverbial. Here's a great verse; here's a great verse—and we quote them out of context. Not that we get the point of it wrong; it's just that we don't get the full impact—in this case in James—of seeing how these truths are juxtaposed. How are they together? How are they linked together? Here's one that we miss all the time from James chapter 1. I mean, both of these truths will stand on their own, but they need to be linked together to see the power of them.

James 1:14: "Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desires." Does that sound like what we've been preaching on? Absolutely. "Then desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin." Right? When, after all, that desire gets riotous and it gets going, and the crowd is out of control, the dominoes are falling, the snowball is rolling—it breaks through the line of propriety; we call it transgression—it's sin. "And when sin is fully grown, it brings forth" corruption—

“death,” which is more than just a biological description. That’s a whole category in the Scripture, philosophically and theologically, of corruption and bad.

So that’s the problem. Now, we often quote verses 14 and 15 when we talk about temptation, and then sometimes we quote verse 17 when we’re talking about, “Isn’t it great, the good things that God gives?” Notice the linking verse and how these are tied together in verse 16. Now, the problem is I’ve got desires; I want them fulfilled. My desires are often enticed, and I’m lured by those desires to cross the line. And then there comes the sin, and the sin burns, and there’s damage. “Now, don’t be deceived, my beloved brothers.” I’m only warned not to be deceived when I’m tempted to be deceived. And I often think, “Well, this will be okay. It’ll be great to have this fire next to the dining room table.” Don’t be deceived. “Every good gift and every perfect gift”—the things that you want, the fulfillment of your desires—“comes from above.” God’s got a plan. God’s got a way to fulfill that. “Coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shadow due to change”—like marriage. God has said, “Here’s the context for sexual fulfillment.” It’s not in an adulterous affair; it’s not in premarital sex; it’s not immediate—it’s right here. Now that is not going to shift; that’s not going to change. That’s what God says. Everything else is going to be damaging—if not inherently, because there’s inherent damage in that—because I’m the rule maker; I get to make the rules. And I say, “You don’t do this. And if you do eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, there’s going to be a disruption”—in what?—in the relationship between creature and Creator. “Don’t do that.”

So I can’t, in my mind, miss this connection between what my desires think would be a great gift for me and what God says is the right, good, and perfect gift—“It comes from me, and here it is.” There are so many things that we could apply to that paradigm, but let me start with the trick that’s played in our hearts when we think about shortcuts to satisfaction. I should have even put in this point, perhaps, the word “satisfaction” in quotation marks, because the things that promise satisfaction that are outside the bounds of what God has commanded—rarely do they bring it. As the Bible says about Moses’s temptations of going along with Egyptians—they are “the passing pleasures of sin.” And the problem with sin, generally speaking, is that it has this effect of giving us some kind of short-term gratification. It quenches our thirst for a moment—but then it really doesn’t. What we talked about a few weeks ago: the principle of diminishing returns. I need more and more of it, because it’s not the thing that really does quench and satisfy. I’ve got to continue to compound it, whatever it might be. I need more gossip, more sex, more pornography, more—whatever it might be—to try... more luxury, more wealth, more whatever, more materialism, to satisfy, because it’s not that.

God said it’s wrong, so we shouldn’t do it. It’s like the old illustration of the guy on the raft. He’s shipwrecked or whatever, and he’s floating on a raft, and he’s hoping to be saved. And of course, you know, he’s anticipating in great hope that he’s going to be rescued and he’s going to have fresh water and he’s going to have food. But he’s on that raft—all the tattered clothes, you can see him—and he’s surrounded by the blue Caribbean waters, which look very refreshing. But of course they’re not. And you would say, I hope, if you know anything, you’re going to say, “Don’t drink the ocean water.” Why? Because though you may think it’s going to be satisfying, and though initially



in your mouth you may think, “Oh, this is wet; this is what I want; this is going to quench my thirst,” it doesn’t. Why? Because the salt content in seawater is higher than our kidneys can process, and actually the fluids from our body have to be sucked into our kidneys just to respond and be able to process that salt water, and we end up dying. And you’re more and more thirsty drinking the salt water, and it ends up killing you.

And the temptation is—in a sea of things that want to promise short-term satisfaction—if you just hold out to when you are rescued, when the proper term and the proper mode and in the proper context God gives you that satisfaction, it’s truly a much better scenario than you diving into the temptation of something that you think is going to satisfy. It rarely does. And it’s like I often put it—and many others have—Satan is great at producing the mirage, the illusion. And I know you think—you think of your marriage—“My marriage is bad; it would just be better—be so much better—to be married and in a relationship with that person.” Really? The Bible says that’s the kind of mirage that Satan wants to always put in front of you. And here you know what God has called you to—the context, for instance, of marriage—to be faithful and to stay married and to respect that covenant of marriage. And we can easily say, “Well, you know what? I just feel like it’d be so much better, Mike—I’d be so much happier, so much more satisfied.” And so we take the offerings—whatever it might be.

The Bible calls us to be generous and to give and not to be hoarding and not to be about the restrictiveness—the parable of the one who (we’ll look at this in Luke) builds the silos; he says, “Finally, now I have security; I can rest; I can relax; I can do the things I want to do; eat and drink, be merry; it’ll be fine.” And the Bible says, look at that person—he’s not rich toward God; he doesn’t care about what God has said in terms of satisfaction. He’s always amassing things based on the world’s rules. And they don’t satisfy. And not only that—God calls him a fool, because it’s not the path that will end the way he anticipates.

So much more I could say on this. Let me just turn you to one psalm by way of illustration—Psalm 16. I guess what I’m pleading with you to do is look past the lies. And I know you know this—it almost seems like a Sunday School lesson. And I guess that’s all right, because we need the reminders of the basics. But you do know the things you’re tempted to do that you know are sinful are a rip-off. You know that, right? Do you know that? I mean, you’ve got a choice to make: in your Bible you see what the Bible says about fulfillment in any area of life—all these natural desires that we have—there’s a way that God has for us to fulfill those. The problem is he’s going to make us wait. It takes too long.

And all I’m telling you is you’ve got to figure out who you’re going to listen to. Satan is right there saying, “Here’s a shortcut to your satisfaction.” But here’s what the Bible says about him—and this is from one who died and rose again, and I’m thinking if he did that, I should listen to what he says. He says about Satan—you remember these words?—he’s a liar; he’s been a liar from the beginning. When he lies, he speaks his native language. That’s just almost all he knows how to do. And what



does the Bible say about God? God's a God who can't deny himself—he's so truthful, according to Titus 1:2, he cannot lie. He speaks the truth. He speaks the truth from his own nature, because he is truth. If the Bible says, "Here's where you can find the thing that would satisfy you—here," and Satan comes along tonight and tomorrow and Thursday and says, "Here's what will make you happy; here's what will satisfy," you just need to make a decision—who are you going to believe?

Now, no one who's going to say, "It'll be so—It'll be so good"—ask Adam and Eve. It doesn't pay. It's not what you think it is. It's a rip-off, a mirage, an illusion. We've got to get to that place at some point.

Psalm 16 illustrates it with real life, I think, context; and that is that—as Asaph said in Psalm 73—we're often looking at sinners going, "They sure look a lot happier than me right now." And we need to get ourselves and them in perspective. Verse 3, Psalm 16: "As for the saints in the land"—now this is almost defying the realities of what oftentimes we feel. The saints feel like they're not having as much fun; they don't feel as fulfilled—"they are the excellent ones, in whom is all my delight." I'm so glad to see them walking within the pattern and the template of this non-shifting shadow—this template that doesn't change. "The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply." Shall—past, present, or future? (Wow, grammar questions are bringing silence.) That "shall"—past, present, or future? Future. They shall multiply. What's the point? A lot of times you see people diverting their lives from the path of what is right, what the Bible says is the right thing to do that will ultimately fulfill us, and it looks like they're doing just fine. (Write "Psalm 73" in the margin of this text.) But here's the promise: it doesn't end well. They will multiply.

"Therefore their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out"—I'm not going to go into their temples—"or take the names of their false gods on my lips." I'm not going to follow what everybody else does. "The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup; you"—Lord—"hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance." The problem with inheritance is you don't have it right now. There's the sense of timing in this passage where you can feel that tension. Verse 7: "I bless the LORD who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me." I'm not running with the rest of the world; I'm settling my heart on his path. Verse 8: "I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken." Therefore my heart will be glad—I'm going to anticipate the joy that comes at the end of this. "My whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure." Not to mention that it's not going to erupt in riots—I'm going to stay the course. Verse 10: "For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption." And at the end of this, you're not going to cast me off. Verse 11: "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

Here's Satan coming on the scene saying, "If you're the Son of God, you should have a full belly; you should be satisfied." And I could translate that, I suppose, into the way that Satan will come into your life and say, "You're a Christian—God has put these desires in your life. You should be

happy; you should be satisfied.” And you’d expect me to say, “Well, don’t believe that.” But in a sense, he’s right. God does want you happy and satisfied. The path, though, is not the same as the enemy’s. That’s the problem. He always wants to give you the microwave satisfaction, the immediate gratification—which is never what God is offering. Rarely, rarely, rarely. He’s got something that’s much better than that. Does he want to fulfill your life? Absolutely. As C. S. Lewis used to say, all these things that are parlayed into sin in our lives—it’s not that God doesn’t want to satisfy those; he does, and he will. It’s that the path is different. It’s that either I’m thinking short-term, or I’m thinking long-term. It comes down to who you trust.

Christ’s response—it’s printed there on your worksheet, verse number 4. He responds with a quotation—Deuteronomy 8—and you’re not far from it, so let’s go there. Deuteronomy, chapter 8. Here’s what Luke records—he says, “It is written, ‘Man shall not live by bread alone.’” Here’s the temptation for Christ: step outside the will of God, exercise my divine prerogatives, independent of God, follow the cue of the enemy, get immediate satisfaction. Stepping outside of the will of God for immediate satisfaction—we called it “shortcuts to satisfaction”—“I’m not going to take those.” That’s our resolve. Christ’s response: “Man shall not live by bread alone.” Well, you kind of need that—what are you talking about?

Here’s the context. Let’s read this together—verse number 1, Deuteronomy 8: “The whole commandment that I command you today you shall be careful to do, that you may live and multiply”—there’s always the promise: obey me, it’ll go well for you—“and go in and possess the land that the LORD swore to your fathers. And you shall remember”—note this now—“the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these 40 years in the wilderness.” Interesting here now that Jesus sets this thing up in the telling of his temptation: 40 days in the wilderness. He now gives a response to Satan about the 40 years in the wilderness of Israel—he makes that connection. “He led you in the wilderness for…”—what?—“that he might humble you, testing you”—that’s what temptation is—“to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger.” Wow. That’s mean of God. No, no—look at this. He let you hunger and he fed you—then supplied your need—with manna, something bizarre, something you didn’t know, something your fathers didn’t know, something unheard of. “That he might make you know”—he wants to make a point—“that man does not live by bread alone.” You didn’t have enough bread; you didn’t have enough cattle; you didn’t have enough food; you were hungry; you said, “What are we going to do? Are we going to die in the wilderness?” And God says, I needed you to know it isn’t about how much you have in the pantry. It’s not how much money you have in your retirement account. It’s not about how much of a savings account—it’s not about any of those things. It’s about—(here’s, in Matthew, the whole of this verse when he records this scene)—“man lives by every word that comes out of the mouth of the LORD.”

That’s a statement of God’s sovereign oversight of all things. He decrees things and they happen. If he wants you dead by three in the afternoon, I don’t care how many times you worked out this week; I don’t care what your doctor said about your health—you’re dead at three, because God determines life and death. He gives life and he takes it away. Now think about this: if he wants you alive at six, I don’t care what happens to you this afternoon—you’re going to make it to six because



he wants you alive this afternoon. God decrees things, and you need to trust that God's providential oversight of your life is going to be cared for, regardless of what immediate needs don't seem to be satisfied.

So when Jesus says, "I'm not stepping outside the will of God to find some kind of shortcut to satisfaction," I'm going to take the lesson of the wilderness, and I'm going to say, "God is going to supply. God will take care of me." It's not right now, but he's going to do it.

Now keep a finger here—I'm not done reading this—but let's jot in number three on our outline. Here's the point of his response from Deuteronomy: We must patiently trust in God's provision. And so should you. Patiently trust in God's provision. You do understand that everything you desire—before it reaches the place of perversion and transgression, the core desires that motivate every sinful temptation we have—the Bible promises he will fulfill it: in this life, perhaps some of it, but in the next life for certain.

That's really the image that shows up next in this passage. Once you've jotted that down—"patiently trust in God's provision"—take a look at what he says: "He humbled you so that you would know it's not about your food. It's about God's decree. It's about God's sovereign oversight. Your clothing"—let's think of that—"didn't wear out," verse 4—"your foot didn't swell those 40 years. Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the LORD your God disciplines you." One thing little kids don't ever worry about: they don't worry about what's in the pantry. They think, "When it's empty, Mom and Dad will get some more and shove more Spaghettios and Cheez-Its in there, and it'll be fine—I'm going to make it." When stuff runs out it's amazing—our kids think that this stuff shows up in the refrigerator. They just—"Wow, that's great!" That's because kids trust their parents, and they recognize it'll be okay. They see the provision and the discipline and even the testing.

"So you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God by walking in his ways and by fearing him. For the LORD your God"—here's the hope—"is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing out in the valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley"—we get it—"vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey; a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity"—you'll have plenty of it—"in which you will lack nothing; a land whose stones are iron"—to build great homes—"and out of whose hills you can dig copper. And you shall eat and be full"—you're going to be satisfied—"and you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land that he has given you."

There's the paradigm that in Hebrews 11 is set up for us: that if you feel the deprivation of saying no to the passing pleasures of sin, you're looking for a kingdom, a world of satisfaction that's beyond this one. As Lewis said, "I have desires in my life; I see nothing in this world can satisfy—I



come to the conclusion I'm made for another world." And that's the reality of the Christian life. It's not this prosperity gospel—that you're going to get it all now. Is there some satisfaction here? Absolutely. You tell the kid in the youth group, "Hey, listen: don't have sex before marriage." Why? Because you can't build a fire outside the fireplace. God blesses the one that you build in the context that he set up—there's no shifting shadow; there's no variation. And then they get to marriage, and they've saved themselves for that, and you know what? There's blessing there. But it doesn't take long being married to recognize what? And I don't mean to bash marriage—I've got a good one—but I'm telling you, it ain't the end all, is it? Right? (That's not going to get an amen if you're sitting with your spouse; I get it.) But it's not.

You recognize that even that desire for intimacy and closeness and companionship and pleasure and all those things that you get a taste of in marriage—there's still something beyond that that you realize is just a foretaste of the ultimate fulfillments for sentient beings in, one day, a resurrected, unfallen body that we will experience in the kingdom of God. And that's what we're made for.

So you need to—even if you think in this life you see no hope for fulfillment—the good land is not just something that's down the road two months, two years, or two decades from now; it's something that's even past the threshold of this world, into the next.

I know I say that kind of thing a lot, but you and I have to be patient in the Christian life to trust that God will provide. Don't give up; don't lose heart. And isn't that—I think of the passage, and I didn't have it here, but just a great text in Galatians 6; we quote this one a lot, too. It talks about the fact that we should not be deceived—(parallel to that James passage)—that God is not mocked. Whatever a man sows, that he'll also reap. It says if you sow to the flesh, you'll reap from the flesh corruption—it's never good. You go outside the bounds of what God has said is right, you're going to reap corruption. If you sow to the Spirit, you'll reap from the Spirit eternal life—which is more than just an eschatological thing; it's really that principle of life that goes beyond just that, but it includes that. That principle is followed by this verse—(talking about putting verses together)—the next verse is this: "And don't grow weary in doing good," which involves a lot of saying no to temptation and immediate gratification. Don't grow weary; do good, because we will reap if we don't give up—if we don't grow weary. Eventually, in time—in due time—we're going to reap. That's the principle here.

How do we get it? Let me be real practical—a little sermon at the end of the sermon. I know we have no time for this, but let's go. Ready? I want to be patient. I want to wait for that. I want to say no to temptation, thinking, "I know God will provide." How do I get that kind of patience for things?



Number one: your Bible. I know—you were about to write something down that you thought was going to be so insightful. Here he goes again—it's the Bible. That's what made... I'm sick of the trajectory of modern evangelicalism—have I said that about a hundred times? Because, you know, we always want something novel and new and something so insightful and methodological. And listen: our grandparents and their grandparents and all the way back through the whole history of the church—they were right about this. It is about your intake—my intake—and my interface with God's Word.

Let me give you two passages on this real quick—just jot them down. Romans 15. Romans 15:4: "Whatever was written in former days"—we're talking about the Bible here—"was written for our instruction, that through the endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope." Think about that. The endurance and the encouragement of Scripture brings us hope. What's the problem every time you fall to temptation? You are, at that point, running out of hope: "I don't think God will graciously provide, lovingly provide for me; I don't think I'll ever have... I'm going to take the shortcut." Scripture gives you that. And in part, there in the context, it's like being a younger brother or a younger sibling watching your older brother or your older sibling get in massive trouble with your parents. It's always good—it was great, me being a younger sibling—because I can learn a lot of things to avoid just by watching the mistakes of my older brother, which he was so gracious to provide so many examples of in my life. That was helpful. If I'm astute, I take notes, and I say, "Hmm, that really torqued Dad—never doing that."

What's the point of that? The concept in Scripture is: when you read, for instance—the wilderness wanderings, 40 years in the wilderness—here are all these people at Kadesh Barnea; they did not have faith to trust God; they didn't trust his Word. Two guys did—Caleb and Joshua. Now for them, it took 40 years until their feet crossed the Jordan and they went into the Promised Land and experienced the good of God. I read it in 30 minutes—the whole story. And what do I get? I'm supposed to get this: that when I'm made to wait for satisfaction, I've got endurance, I've got encouragement, and I get hope out of that.

Get in your Bible. Don't tell me you're a Christian, basing your salvation on this book called the Bible, if you don't read it and get into it all the time. I can't—I don't even understand those of you that say you're Christians and you're not in the Word of God. It makes no sense. It is not only the hope of your salvation; it is the daily hope and encouragement and endurance of growing in the Christian faith and saying no to sin.

And how about this one too under the category of the Bible: Ephesians 6:17. In that picture of the armor of God—which is supposed to make me stand against the schemes of the devil—here's the one offensive tool: it is the sword of the Spirit, which is, Paul said, the Word of God. Is that not what Jesus is doing in this passage? We'll see it for two more weeks. He responds with "It is written. It is written." Now, he, as a kid, had learned, studied—because he's encased in the humility of humanity—he's having to learn by rote, like we have to, the Word of God in his head so that



when he's in a moment of temptation, he is able now to respond and to foil the temptation of the enemy with his logic that seemed really good at first. He's able to do that because he's got the Word of God hidden in his heart.

How about that—Psalm 119: “How does a young man keep his way pure?” He keeps it according to his Word. “Your Word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against you.” The Bible needs to be a better part, a bigger part, of your schedule.

How about this: prayer. If you really want to be grandpa—these are the old school instructions, and they work, and you need to hear it. Prayer—Philippians 4:4–7 talks (parallel to Matthew 6:33) about people always worried that they're going to get their needs met. He says, “Stop worrying—worry about nothing. But in everything, with prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” How often I find people falling into sin—they're falling into sin because they're chasing some satisfaction in their life. And I say, “Have you ever prayed that God would bring that satisfaction?” “No, I haven't asked God.” Tell him. Talk to him. Make it clear. And if you do—and “in everything,” you're bringing those things to God, all garnished with thanksgiving—the Bible says “the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” That doesn't sound like someone vulnerable to sin this afternoon, does it? Prayer.

Number three—just to carry on in Philippians 4, you can jot down verses 8 and 9 (but verse 8 is the key to it). He says this—and there's a lot of things you can think about. You can be sitting on the raft thinking about how good it would feel to drink up the blue Caribbean water. Stop imagining what it would be like to step outside the will of God. Stop it. He says put your mind on—he says “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable—if there is anything excellent, if anything is praiseworthy—think on these things.” Fix your thoughts on what God's will is, not on the temptation. That's what Satan's going to do all afternoon long—before you step off the path, the Bible says you've been entertaining it in your mind. Get your brain to focus on the things that God says are true, noble, honorable, lovely, commendable, excellent, praiseworthy.

Lastly—for the sermon within the sermon—number four: Hebrews 10:23–25. Here's another passage we often just quote verses 24 and 25 that talk about not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together. But it starts with this: “Don't give up that commitment, that hope, that confession of your confidence in God.” How do we stay on this path without falling off the path? The next verse is, “Don't forsake the assembling of yourselves together.” You need other Christians. Some people do that. But we need to meet together and to encourage one another—prompt one another, as he puts it—“stir one another up to love and good deeds,” and all the more as you see the day approaching. Why? Because the darkness is going to invade the culture so heavily that the worse it gets in this world and the worse temptation gets, the more we need each other.



Four things that sound like your grandpa's church—I get it. But here it goes: Bible, prayer, your thought life, and fellowship. You put those in a regular pattern and priority in your life, the Bible says you'll start to be able to patiently trust in God's coming provision.

Close to a hundred years ago—(you can stand as we close here)—one of the most brilliant theologians America has ever produced, Jonathan Edwards, wrote at age 20 what's now known as his "70 Resolutions." You familiar with those? Those are so helpful. Twenty-year-old guy writes in his journal—and a lot of guys do; if you've ever studied his resolutions, it's fun to just take his resolutions (he's such a brilliant man) and to kind of categorize them, because they're almost written, it seems, in a haphazard way. They're all over the map. Two of them I always like to put together in my mind—#56 and #22. His 56th resolution was this: "I am resolved never to give up, never in the least bit to lessen my fight against the corruptions of my flesh." That's what we've been preaching, isn't it? I mean, that's what you expect at church—the old line: "You went to church?" "Yeah." "What did he preach on?" "Preacher preached on sin." "What did he say?" "He's against it." I mean, I understand—that's what you expected: preacher told me to stop sinning. And that's why people don't want to go to church: "Ah, sin is fun; it's great."

Resolution 22—I love to juxtapose these two, pull them together—"Resolved to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness in the other world as I possibly can." For God to tell you, "Don't fall to that temptation this week; don't cross that line" is not trying to restrict you—he's not a killjoy. He's trying to get you down the path to the good land where there's honey and wheat and barley and all those things—where he's going to fulfill you. You and I need to recognize that to say no to sin is not to say no to happiness, satisfaction, fun, or any of that. It incurs something much, much better. God is not in the business of trying to keep you dissatisfied—it's just that you and I have to wait. Most of the time we wait; we recognize—even in this life—it was worth it.

Let's pray.

God, thanks so much for Edwards and so many others who have gone before us to show us a life of godliness—frankly, of saying no to sin in his generation. We want to be like that. We want to be men and women who are willing to stand out from this generation that is so into indulging whatever appetite they have. If it's something they want, they want people to experience it and have it—any inkling, any desire, any appetite, any craving—satisfy it.

God, help us to recognize that the core desires of our lives that would even prompt us to want those things are going to be fulfilled. We just need to patiently trust in your coming provision. Help us to



recognize that's what it means to be storing up as much happiness as we can possibly obtain—recognizing that saying no to sin is saying yes to a lot of happiness down the road.

So get our hearts prepared to fight the battle this week. And for every failure we encounter—never, God, presumptuously—I pray not a single person in this room, I pray, would be sitting both eyes open walking into it. But when we look back and we see our stumbling or falling, we go back to last week's message and remember this: that Christ, thankfully, in that wilderness, earned for us all the righteousness that would make us acceptable to you. We're so grateful that we sang about it this morning, and we're so glad that we stand uncondemned because of Christ's righteousness.

But God, now there's a lot that we can be doing to see our lives obtain a lot more happiness in the world to come by being able not only to live like you lived, but—as we recommended this morning—to fight as you fought. Let us recognize the potential danger that exists in our flesh and be able this week to see some victory that we haven't seen in the past. Let us move forward. Give us more Bible, more prayer, more thought life that's controlled and focused in the right place—fixed in the right place—and give us more fellowship, more time together, to sharpen one another and encourage one another to do what's right.

Thanks for this team. Give them great success this week as they fight these battles. In Jesus' name, Amen.