Pursuing Holiness (part 1)

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Preacher: Tyler Neighbors

[0:00] 1 Thessalonians chapter 4.

! If you're new here or maybe you're visiting today, I've been kind of inching my way through! 1 Thessalonians chapter 4. We find ourselves in chapter 4 and up until this point, you know, kind of the theme of Paul's letter has been pretty encouraging to the church at Thessalonica. You know, the church is obviously going through a difficult season from just the temporal perspective.
They have come to faith in Christ and they have come to faith in Christ in a pagan society where there were all sorts of different religions, primarily probably in this town, probably emperor worship, which that was one of the reasons why the Christian church was so persecuted in this time is because they would not worship the emperor. But there were also other religions that had taken hold of society as well and they did not take too kindly to Christians coming in and disrupting all this. So they've been going through a very difficult season. Paul has praised them for their faith, for their endurance. He has encouraged their strength and exhorted them to continue on because up until this point, if these are new believers, they've got to be wondering, have we done something wrong to have to endure all of these trials when we are following God and obedience? And Paul is saying, no, you haven't. Continue on.
Persecution is something that is going to be expected for the Christian living in a fallen world. So what we're going to be looking at today in our text is that, and this is the main idea, is that God desires holiness for his people. He desires holiness for his people. And this is not a new concept in God's word. In Leviticus 20, verse 26, in the law, God said, you shall be holy to me, for I, the Lord, am holy and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.
So God has always desired for his people to be holy, and that is how we reflect him to a fallen world. Now, one thing that is apparent, though, is that we always fall short of that holy standard, don't we?
[2:33] Doesn't matter how hard we might try, we still have a sinful nature that we struggle with against on a daily basis, and we fall short. But that is where God's grace always comes in and is a hero of our story. Well, Paul is dealing with Christians who, while making great strides in their faith, there was obviously still a lot of need for growth, for sanctification.

We're going to see him encourage them in this sanctification process, and we're also going to see Paul even confront them lovingly on an issue that they are still struggling with. So with that in mind, if you all would stand with me as we read our text today. We're going to read verses 1 through 12. Finally, brothers, I ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you receive from us how you ought to walk and to please God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality, that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God, that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter. Because the Lord is an avenger in all these things. As we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you, for God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore, whoever disregards this disregards not man, but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you. Now concerning brotherly love, you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another. For that indeed is what you are doing to all brothers throughout Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers, to do this more and more, and to aspire to live quietly and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands as we instructed you, so that you may walk properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one. This is the word of the Lord, church. You may have a seat. We're going to be covering just the first eight verses today, and we'll go through the next four verses the next time I get to preach through this passage. But when somebody becomes a believer and submits to the lordship of Christ in their life, their

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struggle with sin does not end. As a matter of fact, I would say it initially, it gets harder. Because up to this point, you have been living a certain way, and now that you have submitted to Christ, your old way of life has no place in your new way of life that Christ has called you to. New believers, even though they have been called to this new life, they need what Romans describes as a renewal of the mind to pursue this new path that is directed towards Christ. And this does not come without its struggle, and at times it's marked by many failures. Holiness does not come naturally to people. It just doesn't.

As a matter of fact, Peter wrote this letter to other persecuted church, and you're going to see a similar charge in this passage that we're going to read. First Peter chapter one, starting in verse 13. Peter said this, therefore, preparing your minds for action and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance. But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, you shall be holy, for I am holy.

[6:41] And if you call on him as father who judges impartially according to each one's deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but he was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you, who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory so that your faith and hope are in God. So having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart, since you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable through the living and abiding word of God. So we see Peter, he is encouraging this persecuted flock, much like Paul's flock at Thessalonica, to deny the flesh, to pursue holiness, to show brotherly love. And I believe that there's a reason for this, why we see similar things in Peter's epistle and in Paul's epistle. Satan is going to attack us when we are weak. When we are undergoing trials like these churches were, we can be tempted to maybe long for the temporary pleasures that we used to indulge in. We remember the fleeting satisfactions of our old life. And if we dwell on it too much,

Satan can lead us to almost long for those things. Well, Paul and Peter both are seeking to remind their disciples that our call to holiness doesn't change with our circumstances. When times get hard, God doesn't just give us a pass on sin. It's in our hard times that the true genuineness of our faith is going to be exposed. And it's often in our hard times where we're going to grow the most in our faith. Also, being a new believer like these Thessalonians were, being a new believer doesn't give you a pass on pursuing holiness either. That's why Paul is reminding them of these commands in regards to holiness. And that's what we're going to be looking at today as we go through this text, is two commands regarding pursuing holiness. And the first one is this, that we pursue holiness through sanctification. We pursue holiness through sanctification. So we've reached this point in Paul's letter where he's exhorting and admonishing and giving these believers some instructions that will be directly applicable to their lives. And the first thing that Paul addresses is their need for more sanctification. It's kind of a key phrase in those 12 verses that we read was more and more. So don't settle, he's saying, keep on going. You know, in the life of every believer, there's an initial act of sanctification that God performs and it's called positional sanctification, where we have been moved from a position of judgment for our sins to a position of grace as a child of God. And once that has happened, we start this process called progressive sanctification. And just a good working definition of sanctification is this. It's the ongoing process by which believers grow to be more like Christ.

It's a journey that all believers are supposed to be on. And one that Paul describes in his epistles several times. One most notably was Philippians chapter 3, verses 12 through 14.

Paul says, not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own, but one thing I do, forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead. I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. So this process of sanctification that we're going to be looking at, it does not end until we are perfected in heaven one day. It is a journey that defines our whole life. And Paul wants to make sure that this church at Thessalonica doesn't miss that. Because according to Paul, they do have a lot to be proud of. This church has had a lot of triumphs and successes in their faith. They have endured persecution so

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much so to the point that they are an example to the other brothers and sisters in Macedonia, not just of endurance, but also of brotherly love and what that looks like. Now, Paul is saying that as you are doing to do so more and more.
[11:48] Paul isn't saying this as a reprimand either. Rather, Paul is kind of playing the part of a loving shepherd in this text, like we will see him do later on in the text whenever he confronts them on sin. But when Paul uses this word urge, the Greek word is parakaleo. And this is not a harsh command. This is not something like you would use in military jargon where you're commanding somebody to do something.

Instead, Paul is presenting this to them in the form of a loving request. Paul wants to come alongside and lead these people to the deeper waters of their faith. Now, there are certainly times when when a pastor or maybe a more mature brother in Christ needs to take more of a disciplinary tone with those that are going wayward. But Paul notices that these believers are on the right track. Even though, yes, there is still some stuff to work on, they're still on the right track. And he sees their progress. He sees their genuine love for the Lord. And he's encouraging this. But also, we can't mistake Paul's light tone for his lack of authority either. If you notice in verse two, he says where he gets this authority from, he's commanding this or saying this in the Lord Jesus.
Anytime we give spiritual counsel to someone, it always needs to be grounded in Christ. We ourselves are not an authority in and of ourselves, and neither was Paul. The things that he said, the things that he was so bold in were from Christ. They were grounded in something that was so much greater than himself. Furthermore, Paul even goes on in verse three to say that sanctification is the will of God for their lives. Now, that's a pretty bold claim to say that something is the will of God for their lives. So when Paul is saying this, we really need to kind of hone in on that and pay attention to it. He echoed this truth again in Philippians chapter one, verse six.
It says, and I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. So God has not sanctified us to leave us where we were. We have come to this progressive faith that leads us more and more into becoming like Christ. That's why Paul, again, encourages him several times as you were doing, do so more and more.
[14:21] And one day it's going to be complete, not because of anything that we do, though, but because God has an appointed day for all of us where we are going to be with him in glory and he will complete that process for us. So in this life, there's actually two kind of applications that we're going to look at today. The first application is this, and that's be made more like Christ.

Christian, maybe you are doing a lot of right things in your faith. Maybe you have reached a certain level of maturity. And I want to repeat the charge from our text today as you were doing. Do so more and more.
Some of you may be thinking, well, I've got this salvation thing down. You know, what more do I really need to be doing in life? I'm already saved. I'm already, you know, positionally sanctified. So what more do I need to do? Well, listen, while you cannot be more saved than you already are, you can always be more like Christ than you already are. And one day that work will be complete. But as I said earlier, it will not be completed because of any finishing touches you have done on it. You will not be the one to say, it's finally done. I've made myself like Christ. This is going to be a work that God will complete in your life. But until that day, until we are face to face with Christ, we can show ourselves as obedient servants of the Lord by pursuing that goal, just like Paul said he was doing in his life and becoming more like his son. And that journey is not going to be without its struggles. Sometimes we have sins in our life that we just can't seem to shake, that it's just hard for us to finally put off that final part of our old self. And maybe you're that person that has just decided, you know, I'm just going to be content with this. God's grace is sufficient for me. I can just repent of it whenever I sin again. I don't really need to put this part of myself off. And you hear that mindset voiced with sayings like, well, you know, no one's perfect. It's okay. God will forgive me. God's grace is sufficient. I don't really need to be forgiven. I don't need to really put this part of myself off. Well, God's grace is sufficient because it frees you from sin, not keeps you comfortable in it. Now, if you've gotten to that point where you're content in your faith, whether with sin or maybe you just think you finally reached that level of maturity where there's nothing else that you need to do, I want to encourage you with this passage from Hebrews. Hebrews 12 verses 1 and 2 says, therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and sin which clings so closely and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross,

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despising the shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.
[17:30] So in this life, sanctification is going to be a progressive journey that it will only ask more and more of you. We won't ever reach that point where we are finally enough like Jesus, but the more like him we become, the more we will want to pursue that journey. So the spiritual disciplines that you're exercising, if you're a believer that is thinking about these things, if you are exercising these spiritual disciplines, if you were already doing things that are leading you to grow in your faith, then from our text today, your response to this needs to be to do so more and more. And this is not an easy journey either. It has its struggles. It has its failures. We see our past life creeping in sometimes and we see Paul addressing a very specific sin with these Thessalonian believers.

This is our next command of pursuing holiness, and that's that we pursue holiness through purity. I want to read part of this passage again, starting in verse three.
It says, For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality, that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God, that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things. As we told you beforehand and solemnly warn you, for God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. Therefore, whoever disregards this disregards not man, but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.
Church, there is nothing new under the sun. One of the big issues that we constantly see in the news is society's struggle with this idea of sexual immorality.
We look at these things on the news and we can think, what on earth has society come to? And the truth is, the world hasn't changed much. The world hasn't changed much since the Bible times.
[19:49] We still struggle with the same sins. We see prominent men in government, businessmen, and even men in the church falling to this sin.

We see the world trying to push the acceptance of sexual lifestyles that are clearly against God's design. And again, we can look at this and wonder, where is the world going?
Well, the world is in the same place that it was back in Thessalonica, back when Paul was writing this. Satan was in control of this lost world then. He's in control of it now.
And Satan is always going to seek to pervert the things that God has created for his glory. And to me, this part of Paul's letter, it honestly kind of came as a shock to me.
Because this seems to be such a prominent sin in our society and was back then, because, you know, Paul was praising this church. Paul was talking about what a great example this church was to the believers in Macedonia.
[20:50] And then all of a sudden, this comes up. And I can tell you that there's nothing that destroys the reputation of a church faster than sexual sin.

Pastors lose their careers and families. Churches split and sometimes wind up closing their doors. And here we see 2,000 years ago, Paul addressing the same issue for a church that he just got done praising.
So I think a little context here will kind of help understand why this church was struggling with this sin like it was. In Greco-Roman world in this time, sexual sin was just part of the culture.
It was just a normal thing. And in cases, it was even part of the religion. Cult prostitutes were not an uncommon thing back then.
In many of Paul's letters to these Gentile Greco-Roman churches, we see him addressing the same sins. This isn't a new thing for Paul. As a matter of fact, Galatians 5, 19-21.
[21:57] Just look at the sins that he starts off with. Now the works of the flesh are evident. Sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.

I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. And there are numerous other passages in Paul's letters where he warns churches about the same thing.
Which is why he encouraged them to let their old selves be crucified with Christ. To let that be in their past, part of their old life, not the new creation that God is making them into.
Now before we move on with what the Thessalonians were struggling with, rather than going through just all the different sexual sins that our culture deals with and that we see in the Bible, I think it's best to just define what sex was meant to be according to God's word.

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And it's this. Between one man, one woman, and the confines of marriage. Anything outside of that is sin.
[23:18] Anything added to that or subtracted from that is sin. That is the way that God has designed it. In Genesis 2, 24, 25, it says, Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife.

They shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Jesus, when speaking on the permanency of marriage, said in Mark 10, verse 9, What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.
Hebrews 13, 4 says, The marriage bed should be kept undefiled. So I say all that to just kind of put it together with one point, that God has a very specific plan in mind for human sexuality.
And Satan has corrupted the heart of man to turn into something else altogether. So for those that are struggling with this type of sin, I want you to hear today what God's word says and how to respond to it.
And from our text that we've read today, there's four reasons and four warnings why we should abstain from sexual immorality. And the first is this. Sexual sin prevents our sanctification.
[24:33] Truthfully, any sin left unchecked in our life is going to become a stumbling block on our path to becoming more like Christ. But this particular sin obviously had some sort of foothold in this church.

So what's going on is these Christians have made a lot of progress in their faith, as Paul has said. Paul recognizes that. But there is still a part of their old lives that needs to be surrendered, a part of their old flesh that needs to be mortified.
When you come to Christ initially, you are not going to be completely like Christ. This is a process. There are going to be parts of your life that are going to take more time to completely die off.
And this was a very prominent part of the old life of these Thessalonian believers. I think it's also worth noting that just before Paul went to Thessalonica, when Paul started evangelizing and doing all these mission trips to these Gentile churches, Gentiles were obviously receiving the Holy Spirit. They were coming to Christ. There was a revival taking place in the Greco-Roman world, and these Jews that had been entrenched in their culture for so long, they didn't really know how to respond to it. So Paul went to Jerusalem, met with the other apostles, and they were trying to figure out, well, do they need to become Jewish first?
[25:52] Do they need to be circumcised first? Do they need to follow all the Jewish laws first before they can actually become Christians? And after Paul told them what was going on, the council at Jerusalem in Acts 15, again, this is just before Paul went to Macedonia and started this church at Thessalonica, they said, the apostles in Acts 15, verses 28 and 29, sent this letter out.

For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements. No greater burden as in referring to the whole law in the Old Testament.
They said that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what has been strangled and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell. So Paul is reminding them of this mandate that has come from the apostles at the council at Jerusalem. And we see Paul playing the role of a loving pastor here.
And he's using his shepherd's crook to kind of guide his church back into this holy pursuit rather than beating his sheep with it. You see him beat some sheep with his crook in 1 and 2 Corinthians, but this church, they're on the right path.
[27:10] They just need to be guided away from areas of their old life. And he's reminding them in verse 4 that God desires that we control our bodies in holiness and honor.

So this new life that we find ourselves in with Christ, it demands a new way of living that no longer reflects who we were. It should no longer reflect the life that we had.
That's why God said that he has set us aside for himself to be holy as he is holy. We are supposed to be something different from the world around us. And when we choose to indulge in those areas in our old life that we have said we're crucified with Christ, we're halting that sanctification process because we're keeping the old self alive.
Now the second reason to avoid sexual immorality is this. It's a sin against other believers. Paul commanded the Thessalonians to not wrong their brothers in this manner.
Now here's the thing with sexual sin. Someone else has to be involved with you. And you knowingly enticing your fellow believers into this sin is not just a disregard for the holiness you have been

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commanded to pursue, but it is a disregard for your brother in Christ who is supposed to be pursuing that same holiness to become more like Christ.
[28:37] And also who is a partaker of the same Holy Spirit that dwells inside of you. You are making a willful choice to draw another believer away from the Lord.

Listen, sexual sin, it was just as much a part of the culture as it is today. Like in our day and time, many of our TV shows that we watch today are littered with these themes.
Many people today have addictions to things like pornography. Yet another element of sin that our culture has glorified. In the home, talking about sinning against another brother and sister, sexual sin has wreaked havoc on the family unit.
Unfiltered access to technology has already warped the minds of so many children that unless Christ does an intervening work in their life, they will never have a gratifying marriage in this life. And it will affect those that they have a relationship with. So just remember that, that your sin, your sexual sin is not just against your own body, but against those that you bring with you.
[29:44] Now the third warning, the third reason why we should avoid sexual sin is that it's a disregard for the Holy Spirit. As a believer, God has given you a new nature to pursue and to go after his statutes and what is pleasing to him.

To convict you of sin and righteousness as John chapter 16 says, your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who literally dwells inside of you when you have been made new in Christ.
Now the church at Corinth, I had mentioned them earlier, this was a church that also struggled horribly with this sin. So much so to the point at times Paul accused them of being proud of the sin that they were struggling with.
So Paul reminded them of this same thing, that their sin is a disregard for the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 6, 19 through 20. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you whom you have from God?
You are not your own for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. When we push aside those holy inclinations, the prompting of the Holy Spirit that says that what we are about to do is sin, whether it's sexual sin or any other type of sin, what we are doing is we are showing a contempt for the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
[31:12] we are letting sin take ground in the battle for our hearts. So believer, when God made you new in Christ, at that point, you were no longer your own.

You belonged to Him. And to seal that, He gave you His Holy Spirit so that we could pursue God with a new nature, a new heart.
And any time that we are willingly running back to these old sins that were supposed to have died off with our old self, we're pushing the Holy Spirit aside. And we're saying, I want to go back to my old life.
So don't disregard the Holy Spirit. The fourth and final reason that we see from this text in Thessalonians is that sexual sin brings God's wrath.
Sexual sin brings God's wrath. So that God is an avenger of these things. And when we look throughout the Bible, we can see examples like David, Bathsheba, Sodom and Gomorrah, the Canaanites, the church at Pergamum in Revelations chapter 2, or the unrighteous men and women in Romans chapter 1 that we hear about, where God's wrath was directly focused on these particular sins.
[32:36] And here's the sad part about this sin, is that like David, when he sinned with Bathsheba, we've gone to even greater sinful lengths to try and do away with the consequences of this sin.

David committed murder on a pretty grand scale to try to cover up the sin that he had committed with Bathsheba. As a culture, we have normalized abortion on a nationwide scale as an attempt to do away with the consequences of sexual sin.
Rather than children being the blessing that God has intended them and created them to be for our lives, they have become an interruption to our amorous lifestyle that we would rather live in without any consequences or interruptions.
Even the Republican Party, who is the big champion for the Roe v. Wade lifting, they've even kind of removed the moral imperative on this by saying, they don't say abortion is wrong anymore. Instead, what they say is, well, we've made it available to the states now to make up their own mind for what's best for their own people. Without God, there is no moral absolute.

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[33:57] And this is why God has given us a clear design for sex and that is in line with what he has made for creation. Again, which is one man, one woman in the confines of marriage.

When you go outside those barriers, that's when we see the consequences start coming in because it's no longer glorifying to God. our final application is this.
Be made pure in Christ. Listen, there's a lot of guilt that comes with this sin. And I want to talk to Christians first that are here.
If this is a sin that you are struggling with, I know that the physical amplifications of it can be severe. There are lots of consequences that come when we sin in this manner, but I want to tell you from 1 John 1, 9.
John says, if you confess your sins, God is faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Again, I'm not going to say that there won't be physical ramifications for the sins you've committed, but you can be spiritually pure before God through repentance and forgiveness.
[35:16] 1 John says that God cleanses us from all unrighteousness, not just certain unrighteousnesses. There's never going to be a point in your life where repentance, genuine repentance, It won't bring healing to your relationship with God and lead you back onto that path of sanctification.

So for you, believer, don't think that you've finally messed up one too many times that God's not going to forgive you anymore. Don't think that it's just time for you to wallow in your guilt and think, you know, I've messed up so many times.
This is just my lot in life. I'm just going to live in it. That's not what God has called you to. That's not what Paul was telling the Thessalonians that they needed to live in either.
Instead, God calls us to repent and to return to God's will for your life, which is your sanctification. To become more like Jesus until one day he completes that work in heaven.
Now, if you are here and maybe you're new to church, maybe you're not a Christian. If you've never had a relationship with God through Jesus, and this is new information for you, my encouragement for you is this.
[36:27] Don't think of this as a permanent black mark over your head that is going to keep you from coming to Christ. Listen, the Bible is full of examples of God's mercy on sinners.

We mentioned David and Bathsheba earlier. We can talk about all the great things that David did in his life, but the real hero in David's story was God's grace, and it can be the hero in your life too.
The woman that was caught in adultery in John chapter 8, when she was thrown before the feet of Jesus, Jesus didn't condemn her. Jesus didn't say, pick up your stones.
Instead, he forgave her. So if you're hearing this message and you're thinking that maybe Jesus isn't the person for you, maybe you've indulged in this sin too much and you've been disqualified from grace, I want to tell you that the truth is exactly the opposite.
Jesus is exactly the person you need to run to. 2 Corinthians 5 says, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.
[37:37] If God is calling you to repentance, if he is calling you to faith, then John 6, 37 says that all that the Father gives me will come to me and whoever comes to me, I will never cast him out.

So if you come to Jesus in faith seeking salvation, he's not going to cast you out. That is good news for any sinner. And if sexual immorality is something that you are struggling with or currently living in, there is hope.
There is redemption in Jesus Christ. There is a path back to sanctification. You can be made right with God through the forgiveness and atonement that Jesus Christ offers.
Now if you're here and maybe this sin isn't what you are struggling with, there is a broader meeting here for you too. There is no unrighteousness that God cannot forgive.
If you are a believer or an unbeliever and you are so entrenched in a certain sin that you don't know if you should come to Christ or not, you need to come to Christ. He can forgive, he can cleanse from all unrighteousness and he will not cast you out.
[38:51] So as we enter into our time of response, we'll open the altar up and believer, my question for you is that what sin is there that you need to repent from?

What is it that is handicapping your journey of sanctification and becoming more like Christ? What unrighteousness do you need to be cleansed from? Any sin left alone in your life is going to be a barrier between you and Christ.

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So my encouragement to you today is to come today, repent, and be made right. To you who are here that have never repented, that have never had a relationship with Christ, your new life can start today.
You can be made new in Christ and be that new creation that 2 Corinthians says we can be. The sins you have committed, they don't have to be permanent stains. Isaiah chapter 2 says that we can be washed white.
If you come in faith to Christ today, he will not cast you out. So my call for you today is to come to Jesus.
[40:05] Repent of your sins for the first time. Be made a child of God. Let's pray. Father, I thank you that, Lord, you have given us this hope in your word.

Lord, that there is no sin, there is no unrighteousness that you cannot cleanse us from. Lord, I pray for the believers that are here today. Lord, I pray that if they are struggling with sexual sin or with any other sin, I pray that they would come today and repent.
Lord, that they would long to be made right with you. Lord, I pray for the unbeliever that is here today. Lord, their greatest need is for a relationship with you through your son, Jesus Christ.
I pray that you would awaken their spirit to that need. Lord, that you would call them to repentance today. And Lord, that we would see you make new creations in Christ. Lord, I thank you for your word, for the hope that it brings.
And I pray that your word would not return void today. I pray for all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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