

02-09-06a Revelation

Let's take a moment at the beginning of our study this evening to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and cultivate the ministry of God the Holy Spirit who is always with us but has varying degrees of success in communicating to us because we sometimes listen better than others. And there's no more important time to be sensitive to His leading and guiding ministry than when we're trying to understand God's Word and not just have an academic understanding but also perceive the effect and the influence that the mind of God should have on our mind. And it is a critically important function, not the only one, to understand God's Word and to have the Holy Spirit enable us and make it understandable to us.

It's equally important at the point of meditation and at the point of application to try to be sure that we're available to be taught by God's Spirit in these things. It is so easy to get caught up in the moment. You watch children that you're trying to teach something and you drill them and you train them and you say, now this is what you do in this situation and this is what you need to remember and these are your priorities and this is your goal and this is how to implement it.

And they nod their head up and down like one of those things in the rear window of the old cars in the 60s. And they say, oh yes, I understand, I understand. Then you put them up on the bicycle and you give them a shove and they completely forget everything you just told them and crash.

And we tend to do the same thing spiritually. But what a great privilege it is to have God's Word in our hands. We don't have to wait for it to be read in Latin by somebody that has the only copy in town chained to the pulpit as was the case not too many hundred years ago.

We have our multiple copies. I can't count the number of Bibles I have. And it still amazes me that we can have our own personal copy of the Word of God.

When I pass away, I want to do like W.A. Criswell, and I want my Bible on my chest in my right hand just to know that I've got a copy there if I need it. Maybe I'll get to take it with me when I resurrect. But let's pause here for just a moment and make sure that we are amenable and susceptible to God's ministry to us this evening.

Let's pray. Father, Your grace and faithfulness toward us is manifested in so many ways every day. And we, I'm sure, are not ever conscious enough of the multiple ways that You provide for us and bless us.

Your faithfulness is great. Your mercies are freshly renewed every day, every hour, every minute. The magnitude of Your power, the more we think about it, the more amazing it is that You take an individual interest in each one of us.

We pray tonight as we seek to understand this portion of Your Word, that Your Spirit will be able to lead us in a straight path through the Word of truth. We pray that we'll come to a right

understanding and appreciation for the points that the Lord Jesus makes in these letters that are addressed to the church, and therefore to us. We pray that as a result of coming to an understanding, these concepts and principles and doctrines will be in our souls, so that as we move forward in our lives and draw ever closer to the day when the Lord returns for us, we will be more and more conformed to His image, more and more ready to leave this life and enter into the next.

We pray in our study this evening that the Lord Jesus Christ will be glorified, and we pray it in His name. Amen. Our study tonight in Revelation chapter 2, beginning at verse 12, the letter to the church at Pergamos, is entitled Legalism or Licentiousness.

Legalism or Licentiousness. I won't bore you with the details, but if you're familiar with mythology and with things like the Odyssey and so on, you'll know what Scylla and Charybdis represent. And legalism meaning an undue emphasis on rules and standards, which are often of human manufacture for believers, in terms of definition of what is right and what is proper, and what is the Christian thing to do.

Legalism, overemphasis on a rigid set of standards, is one extreme into which we can easily stray. The other is licentiousness. Licentiousness is a multi-syllable word that comes from license.

James Bond 007 had a license to kill. He has permission, he has freedom from the British government to kill when necessary. Well, license is taking the liberty and the freedom that we have in Christ and pushing that to an extreme.

We have seen over and over again in our studies that if there is an overarching principle of interpretation in the word of God, in either the Old Testament or the New, it is balance. If you find anything tending toward an extreme, or something that is pushed to its limits, you will find that it has left its biblical foundations and has become distorted and twisted. For every significant doctrinal truth, for every emphasis that you find in the word of God, you will find at least one other doctrine or principle that balances it and keeps us from taking it to an extreme.

We have freedom in Christ, but we also have constraints. Things that we may be free to do, we refrain from doing because of other considerations. Even though it is not technically wrong, it may injure a fellow believer.

It may lead someone astray. It may hinder the testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And so the law of love tells us that we should stay balanced.

Balance is not just a principle that stands alone. We are balanced because of the principle of love. God Himself demonstrates balance.

He has the characteristics of love, but His love is balanced by His justice. He has a righteous and

just standard, but it is balanced by His love and compassion. And God is not constantly looking for someone to judge and someone to pound flat and to destroy because of their iniquity, nor is He expressing unqualified love to some or all of the human race.

His attributes balance each other, and in none of His actions is He ever compromised. And we are seeking to be restored to the image of God in which we were originally created, and that requires balance. In the letter that Jesus writes to the church at Pergamos, beginning in Revelation 2, verse 12, He says to the angel of the church in Pergamos, These things says He who has the sharp, two-edged sword.

I know your works and where you dwell. Of course, we've noted that the works phrase is a later addition. He says, I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is.

And you hold fast to My name and did not deny My faith, even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. That's how they translate pornusai here.

Pornusai is the verb form, the noun is pornaia. We have seen that the root meaning of that word is disloyalty. And of course, it is often used specifically for sexual immorality.

And we'll talk more about that shortly. Thus, you also have those who hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Now, these two issues, the doctrine of Balaam, and the teaching of the Nicolaitans, these are the two extremes.

Licentiousness, or liberty, and legalism. The doctrine of Balaam is on the abuse of liberty side. The teaching of the Nicolaitans is on the human standards, human measurement, human determination of who is in and who is out.

He says in verse 16, Change your mind. This is an imperative from Metanoeo. Change your mind, otherwise I will come to you suddenly.

Suddenly is a better translation than quickly. It's not talking about the speed at which he comes, it is the suddenness with which he will come. I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

Now, what I find fascinating about this is, if you think about this idea of poles, areas where by losing balance you get to one extreme or another, you have a big advantage in having a two-edged sword, don't you? Because you can slice in either direction. Put the sword in the middle, you swing to the left, and you hit all of the licentious crowd. Swing to the right, and you hit all of the hyper-conservatives, and all of the legalists, and the ones who have made their own little miniature kingdom, where there's a little power structure, and control, and judging of one another.

So that's why you have the two-edged sword coming from the mouth of the Lord Jesus. And it's

mentioned at the beginning, and it's mentioned again at the end. Everything here talks about a duality, poles of extremity that are not proper, and should not be countenanced.

This is a good time to point out something that I have refrained from mentioning up to this point, but I'm going to mention it now. I couldn't decide exactly when to point this out, but we're in the third letter here, so this is probably as good a time as any. Look again at our text, beginning in verse 13.

He says, I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. You hold fast to my name. You did not deny my faith.

But I have a few things against you in verse 14. All of those you's that you find there are singular. All of the you's, with one other exception, in the letter to the Ephesians, in the letter to the residents at Smyrna, and indeed in all of these letters, when you see the pronoun you, with just a couple of exceptions, it is singular.

This is an interesting point, because these are letters to churches. He says at the end of each letter, he who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. But the you is in the singular.

So we have two choices here. He says, write these to the angel of the church. So it's possible that the singular you is a reference to the pastor, to the one who is the under-shepherd, who has been tasked with the responsibility of oversight and guidance.

People say, well, this pastor thing looks like a pretty good deal, because you get to stand up and tell everybody how it is. But like the husband in a marriage, or like the military officer who gains rank with that privilege and with that authority, goes responsibility and accountability. And from those to whom much is given, much is required.

So that is one possibility. Another possibility is that it is the church that is more or less personified and singularized and spoken of in the singular, you as a church. Although ecclesia being a collective noun, you tend to see it used with the plural.

But that's another possibility. You have the lampstands. If you were talking to a lampstand and personifying it, you would say, hey you lampstand, I want you to do this and I want you to do that.

But you have in the church at Ephesus, he says, if you don't change your mind, I will remove your lampstand out of its place. But I will tell you what I think the emphasis is here. Because at the end of each letter, he says, to him who overcomes, I will grant.

And this is talking about individuals within the church. Jesus does not have the unrealistic expectation that every single believer in any given church is going to hear and heed and change his mind. There are going to be individuals, even in the churches that are accused and are

scolded for their problems.

He says, but you have some there who have not soiled their garments. You have some there that have not denied my name. You have some who have not failed.

And so he distinguishes individuals within the church. And the effect, however you want to take these singular use, the effect is that these letters sent to the pastor and delivered to the group of believers who met in that home church, ultimately the message of the letter is addressed to each of us as individuals. It is not a collective church that is going to be awarded the crown of life.

It is not the entire church as a body that is going to be granted any of these overcomer rewards. These will go to individual believers. So the evaluation and the warning and the reward is available as individuals.

Now this, again, sort of cuts both ways because on the one hand, it's comforting because if you have a church full of reprobates or disinterested, apathetic, distracted, whatever the problem might be, you still have the chance to be an overcomer, to be an individual of faith. If you're in a family that doesn't have an interest or has varying degrees of interest, has only a superficial lukewarm interest or spurts, flashes of interest when the chips are down and then when things go well, it wears off, you don't have to be held back. No individual believer has to wait for anyone else to change their mind and to move forward.

There are wives whose husbands are indifferent or even antagonistic in some cases. You don't have to wait. Ideally, your husband is the spiritual head of the house and takes the lead in spiritual things.

But if he doesn't, look at these letters. It's addressed to the individual you. You can look at these principles.

You can apply them. You can be faithful. You can pursue the high calling of God in Christ Jesus regardless of your circumstances, regardless of your location, regardless of your obligations, regardless of your family situation or your work situation or your church situation.

You're an individual. You're a priest after the order of Melchizedek. The Lord Jesus Christ is your high priest.

It doesn't matter what your gender, your nationality, your age, your status, your standing. Nothing matters in the spiritual realm except your positional truth in Christ and in that we are all equal. That's what Paul is talking about when he says there is neither Jew nor Greek.

There is neither slave nor free. We are all one in Christ. We are the same in that respect.

We have equal potential. And so it's a very encouraging thing. By the same token, the other cut of the sword here is that there are believers who think, well, I'm in a really swinging church here.

Our church is active. Our church has ministries. Our church is on the right road.

Our church has the right emphasis and is impressive to God and impressive to the world. And our church is really shaking and moving in some respect. And I'm in the church, so I'm in good shape.

And I'm just sort of being carried along on that bandwagon. We talk about the bandwagon. I don't know that they even have bandwagons anymore.

I'm not sure I would recognize one if I saw it. But to be carried along with the group, there are people who say, well, I give to the church and the church does great things and so I'm all set. Or I attend every time the doors are open at some big church or whatever and that church is great.

If you ever get introduced to people, as I do quite often, the first question is, if it's in a context of believers, they say, oh, where do you go to church? And you return to, well, where do you go to church? Oh, I go to XYZ church that's got this and that and the other. Oh, you can see the steeple a mile away. They're huge.

Oh, yes, I'm in the 23rd sub-segment of the adult Sunday school class that's got 200 people in it and so forth. But people have to be careful as believers. We have to be careful to not have a bandwagon mentality.

Well, I'm associated with someone. A spouse can say, well, I've got a spouse that's really going 55 miles an hour down the road to glory and because I'm married to them, well, I'll just kind of hang on and get right in with them. You're not dragged down by others and you're not carried along by others either.

We each bear our own load and you can't say at the judgment seat, but Lord, and start pointing at somebody. It's His fault that I didn't do better. Jesus did not give your church or your spouse or your parents or your children or anybody else the gold piece for you to invest.

Remember the parable of the talents? He hands it to the individual servant and he says, you, servant, I'm going to give you five or I'm going to give you three or I'm going to give you one. You do something with this. I'll be back in a little while.

I want you to show me what you've done. Well, there was no handing off. There was no proxy.

There was no surrogate. The servant didn't go to an underservant and say, well, I got this from the master. Here, you take it and do something with it and report back to me.

And the guy that had the one talent didn't say, but Lord, I'm in the group with these other two servants and look how well they did. I mean, eight out of ten is not bad. Five made five more.

Three made three more. So, you know, the eight got doubled to sixteen here if my math is right. So, you know, sixteen out of twenty, why don't you just kind of lump me in with this group and put

us all on the road to glory? We are each individually responsible.

So, when you look at the word you here, and I'll tell you the ones that are plural, and they're the obvious ones. He says there are some of you who will be tested. He says the devil is about to throw some of you into prison in Smyrna.

Well, some of you is plural because obviously you can't take one arm off of somebody and say, I'm going to test that arm and then I'll give it back to you later. But it's generally obvious. But ninety-five percent of the time here when you see the pronoun you in the letters to the seven churches, it is singular.

It's personal. It's individual. And you cannot blame your circumstances.

These people who live where Satan has his throne and where Satan dwells have just as much opportunity and just as much responsibility as anyone else. Well, we've got this contrast pointed out here in Pergamos for liberty on the one hand or licentiousness versus legalism. Well, that doesn't seem to exactly pop off the page at us, so how do we know that? Well, first of all, he says you dwell where Satan's throne is and even when Antipas was martyred and killed among you where Satan dwells.

So you have Satan's throne on the one hand and you have where Satan dwells on the other. The presence of Satan is mentioned twice and everything in Pergamos seems to be doubled. There's two extremes given.

Satan's throne is one place. The throne was kind of like a judgment seat. The king didn't live on the throne, did he? They didn't bring him his meals and he didn't eat off a TV tray and doze off and do his nightly sleeping in his throne.

The throne is the place where the king conducts business. Thronos in Greek, T-H-R-O-N-O-S is also used for a judge's bench. Thronos.

It's sometimes interchangeable with Bema. It has the same idea. It's the place where business is conducted, where administrative decisions are made.

So it's a place of business. Where Satan dwells, at the end of verse 13 there, that is the word katoikeo. Katoikeo is the word for living in your home.

This is your domestic situation. So Satan's place of business is in Pergamos and so is the home, the relaxed place where you let your hair down, where you slip into your house shoes and relax. And one of these extremes is going to reflect Satan's place of business and the other is going to reflect Satan's relaxation.

And it's not hard to figure out which is which. The Nicolaitans correspond to the throne and the Doctrine of Balaam types correspond to the dwelling because freedom and licentiousness are in

your off hours. That's what you do on your own time.

That's your mode of relaxation, your pleasure seeking, your fun stuff, your hobbies and your avocations. Jesus says, I have a few things against you. And the great thing about the, people don't like to talk about the language of the Bible being polyvalent, which is a fancy way of saying meaning more than one thing.

But the singular here is also something of a rebuke to the pastor of the church at Pergamos. Because when he uses the singular you, it applies just as much to the pastor as it does to anyone else in the church. And the letter is addressed, first and foremost, to the pastor of the church.

And he says, I have against you these few things. One, you, singular, have there those who hold the Doctrine of Balaam. So if he's addressing the church, Jesus is rebuking the church for tolerating the presence of these licentious people.

And it's also a rebuke against the pastor. Why has the pastor tolerated their presence? Why are they still in the church? It's one thing to have them in the city, but Jesus is indicating that they have them in the church. And this is a subject to which I will return shortly.

Because what I want to do first, having said that, is just document how we know the Doctrine of Balaam is licentious. We talked last time, and I got started and kind of left you twisting slowly in the wind here, on the Doctrine of Balaam and on the whole idea of having integrity, or having chayil, C-H-A-Y-I-L. And if you go back with me to Numbers chapter 24, I'd like to quickly finish up that discussion.

Because I'm not sure I did the Perry Mason thing. I'm not sure I connected it up and made it all clear. Balaam delivered an oracle.

What is the Doctrine of Balaam? This is our little sub-point here under licentiousness. What is the Doctrine of Balaam? Because I thought Balak hired Balaam and all he did was bless Israel. So how can that turn out to be licentiousness? Well, Balaam delivers these four oracles in Numbers 24 and in Numbers 25.

And if you look at these, he says, I see him now, but not near, he says that they're going to multiply, they're going to conquer, they're going to take the land, they're going to take possession of Edom and take possession of Seir and so forth. But I want a key on Numbers 24.18. All of these other things, but it's a conditional promise. All of these things will be true so long as Israel performs valiantly.

That's what it says in Numbers 24.18b. And this is a loophole. This is a weakness, if you will. Everything God has said is going to come to pass, but there's a, we talked about this last time, everybody says, oh, we're all overcomers, we're all inheritors, and they don't read the conditional clause that says, if you endure, you will inherit.

If you are patient unto the end, you will inherit. People don't read the conditional, they just want to get to the good stuff. Well, there is a condition on this, and it is hidden.

You have to look closely, but Balak probably had scribes writing down everything that Balaam said. And after they shooed Balaam away and said, boo on you, you're doing nothing but blessing these people, they went back and parsed out everything that Balaam said. And they said, hey, wait a minute.

He says that all of these good things are going to happen while or so long as Israel performs valiantly. Well, the word valiantly there is chayil. And chayil is the idea of being worthy, of being valorous, of being faithful.

And I mentioned to you that all of the different passages last time that talk about the idea of integrity and of faithfulness to God, it's used of the admirable woman in Proverbs 31, 10 and 29. It's used in Ruth chapter 3 and verse 11. We're talking about Ruth and saying everybody knows that you're an admirable woman.

So what they did, they found in what Balaam said a loophole. They found a vulnerability in Israel. These blessings will come true as long as Israel does valiantly.

So what's the solution? Balak said, you know what? If we can get them to not do chayil anymore, if we can get them to not be valiant and not be loyal to their God, it negates the blessing. Everything Balaam said goes on hold because the God that Balaam is quoting there said it is good as long as they are faithful, as long as they endure. So what came to be known as the doctrine of Balaam shows up in Numbers chapter 25.

While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. And the word translated play the harlot here is the Hebrew equivalent of pornosai. And it doesn't mean specifically to fornicate, although it is used for that, but it is another word for disloyalty.

They began to be disloyal. The New American Standard says they began to play the harlot. In the New King James it says they began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab, the daughters of Moab.

But look at what they did. Now there was obviously some sort of fornication associated with this, but look at verse 2. They, the daughters of Moab, invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods. Little G. And the people ate and bowed down to their gods.

So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel. It wasn't just the fornication part. It wasn't just that they were getting happy with the daughters of Moab.

That was a ploy, and was a part of a more severe disloyalty to the God of Israel, because these

women induced and seduced the people of Israel into false worship. Now do you think these Israelites just repudiated the God that had brought them out of Egypt and said, Oh, He's not God. I'm going to believe in Baal of Peor.

This was a convenience. They could have had no interest whatsoever in Baal, but it was a compromise because there were these pretty gals who were making themselves available. And there's a lot going on here.

It's not just going off behind the haystack. There are feasts. There are parties.

They have a rationale and an explanation for their worship. This makes your herds more productive. It makes your crops more fertile.

It makes you prosperous. It's a good thing. It's a good luck charm.

It certainly doesn't hurt. Look at us. Look how well we're doing over here in Moab and Midian and so on.

We're doing well, and we do these things, so come on and join us. Try it out. You'll like it.

It's fun. And the people of Israel said, Well, sure. I can still be an Israelite.

I'll listen to Moses. I'll honor God. We'll still go down to the tabernacle and so forth.

I'm still collecting my manna every day. But hey, here's a nice little diversion. We're stuck out here in the wilderness of Shittim, so why not do this? And that's what they did.

It's a compromise. It's a meeting halfway because it's alluring. There are pleasures.

There are positives that are being dangled in front of them. You remember the hymn that says, I am resolved no longer to linger, charmed by the world's delights. Well, they're being charmed by these things.

They've been led into the licentious aspect. We're free. We're Israelites.

We're out here on our own. We're not in bondage anymore. Let's do this.

That's what they've done. Now, if you look at 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 8, there is a New Testament commentary on this very incident. 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 8. Paul is talking here to the Corinthian church and exhorting them.

He says, let us not do the things that are set forth in the Old Testament as our example. Look at 1 Corinthians 10.1. Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food. That's going to be something we'll think about when we get to

the reward here for the Pergamites.

They all drank the same spiritual drink, for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ. But with most of them, God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. Now these things became our examples to the intent that, for the purpose that, we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.

Now you say, well I don't see any bodacious Midianite girls and Moabite girls come and try to drag me away from Bible class. What is the equivalent in our modern day? And what if you're a woman and not a man? Because the women in Israel were led astray just like the men. What is it today that lures us away? I started to bring tonight, but since it's a visual aid and tapes aren't visual, I decided I would just attempt to describe it.

But I have a catalog that came in the mail not long ago for a conference that was held here in Dallas back in May. It was a spiritual life conference. They had speakers from all over the country coming in.

And they had thousands of people come in for a conference. And it was all about how to really ramp up and revitalize your spiritual life. And it was all revolving around counseling.

It was all revolving around taking advantage of the advances in psychology and in understanding the way the human mind works and in overcoming your codependency and in getting rid of your fears and in gaining confidence and overriding your guilt and filling in the gaps of your insecurities and this sort of thing. Pages. This was like a 14-page catalog detailing the speakers and touting this as one of the greatest revolutionary boons for the church that has ever come along.

And this is just one example. I get stuff like this in the mail nearly every week. And what is this? It is a compromise with the world.

It appeals to our desires because everyone desires to feel better. We don't like feeling insecure. We don't like feeling bad around other people.

We don't like feeling guilty. We don't like feeling ineffectual. We don't like feeling weak when we want to do certain things and we are not that way.

We want to be a certain way and we are not. We want to overcome and we want to persevere and we want to triumph in circumstances and we feel like we are not. Well, here is a great solution that is all wrapped with a great spiritual church rapper presented by notable name brand Christian people that you have seen on TV.

And people say, Hey, this is great. And they go down by the numberless scores to pay their \$120 fee and get in for this week of refreshment and spiritual encouragement in the philosophy of the world. Here is how to rehabilitate your mind.

And we will pray at the beginning. We will say praise God several times in the middle. But the substance of it and the gist of it is human science.

Science that studies the way the mind works and the cause and effect of our feelings and our attitudes. Well, that is just one example. There are many things that drag us into compromise.

It is the doctrine of Balaam. It seeks out the Achilles heel. What is it that draws us away from reliance on God? What is it that takes away from our belief in the sufficiency of God's Word as the manufacturer's manual on the human soul? On the power of God in the person of His Spirit and in the power of His Word to transform us, to renew our minds, to strengthen us, to stabilize us, to give us self-control, and joy, and peace, and patience, and endurance.

All of the fruit of the Spirit. What is it that invites itself into the cracks in our armor? What is it that interposes itself between us and God's Word and God's Spirit and seeks to substitute itself as a quick answer, as an alluring substitute? That is the doctrine of Balaam. And it will do to us the same thing it did to them.

Look at 1 Corinthians 10 again. Now these things became our examples. There are people who want to say, well, there's not a real strong analogy between the Old Testament Israelites and the church.

They suffered and lost out on blessing and reward, but that won't happen to the church. All believers in the church are in Christ and you sort of have a special tamper-proof band around you and nothing can cause you to fall. Christ has you in His hands and everybody is going to get all of the blessings and all of the rewards.

You're special. You're not the same. Well, Paul says, look, you better study Old Testament Israel.

You better pay attention to what happened to the people in that nation before God because that is our example. These things became our examples. And the purpose of it, the intent of it, is that we should not desire and be allured by these evil things the way they were bamboozled, the way they were sucked in, the way they were deceived and lulled and lured.

And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. You could stamp that on the cover of the American culture today.

We sit down to eat. We rise up to play. We have got every form of entertainment known to man and you can get it in multiple media forms.

You can get it on DVDs. You can get it on broadcast. You can get it on cable.

You can get it at the movie theater. You can get it over your radio. You can get it over the internet.

How many different ways are our minds pulled away from concentration on who we are and why we are here as believers? How many countless distractions do we have in our prosperous American culture? How many diversions? How many activities? How many opportunities do we have to go out and burn time in the activities of daily life? None of which are necessarily inherently sinful. They become sinful, they become evil when they become a substitute. Nothing wrong with sitting down to eat.

There is nothing wrong with getting up to play unless it is an evil sitting down, unless it is an evil getting up. And that is when it is substituted for and when it runs contrary to God. Verse 8, Ignore, let us commit pornia as some of them did.

And it is a shame to me that we don't have a better equivalent for the pornia word group in Greek. Because as soon as they say sexual immorality we can say, I don't have that problem. I am happily married.

That is not an issue for me. Yes, it is. Because this is disloyalty.

It expresses itself. Anytime sexual immorality occurs, whether it is fornication or adultery, there has been a preceding set of thoughts that were disloyal. If somebody has sex outside their marriage, that is the culmination of a mental defection that took place at some previous point, isn't it? You don't just suddenly find yourself in that situation, about to have intimate physical relations with someone.

That comes from a process that got started way back. And it started in the mind. And there was a decision, there was a moment where there should have been loyalty and there was disloyalty.

That is what pornia is. And it may or may not culminate in a physical act. The pornia occurs at the point of mental defection.

That is why Jesus told the Pharisees if you look at a woman to lust after her in your heart, you are guilty of that sin. Because you have started down the path at the point that you are disloyal. And you can be disloyal at any given point.

Before you meet someone, while you are married to them, it is a very underestimated problem. So it is a shame to me, I wish we had a better word than saying commit sexual immorality. Nor let us commit disloyalty.

And this disloyalty took a physical form in Israel, but it began with a spiritual disloyalty. Because they would have never been in a position to have relations with these Moabite women except that they had decided to compromise what they had been taught from the law of God. As some of them did.

And look at the consequence. In one day, 23,000 fell. Now this takes us back to numbers.

This takes us back to numbers where as a result of this disloyalty in Israel, God is angry. In the fierce anger of the Lord, He says to Moses, take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the Lord. Now you think, now wait a minute, it is just going and partying with the Moabites and well there was some hanky-panky there that was really bad, but that is surely not a death penalty offense is it? You know, boys will be boys and their wives forgive them.

Can't they reconcile? I mean this seems very severe. But look, take the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the Lord out in the sun so that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel. This is one area where, one of the reasons capital punishment gets so much abuse in our nation is because it is not done properly.

It should be done publicly. They should televise. Every time they give somebody a lethal injection, every time they use the electric chair or a firing squad or whatever they are going to use, it ought to be publicized.

They ought to do it out in public, they ought to gather the crowds, they ought to televise it and everybody ought to make their kids watch. That is why they did it in Israel. That is God's pattern.

So, this was written for our instruction. We are going to pause here and take our break. But, licentiousness is not just gross sexual immorality.

It is a defection of the mind. It is compromise with the world. And when it is tolerated in the church, Jesus says to them, you, individually, you are allowing this.

You are allowing people who hold the doctrine of Balaam to hang around. He says, you can't do that. One day, 23,000 fell.

That is God's attitude toward that kind of thing. If people are compromising with the world, that is a time to separate. If you tolerate it in your church, your church is going to suffer discipline.

Look at the example of Israel. So, we need to examine ourselves and make sure that we don't have areas of compromise that are going to cost us, in the eternal future, the blessing and the approval of the Lord God. Let's pause here and take a break.

When we come back, we are going to pick up and finish this and then take a look at the other side, the Nicolaitan problem.