

Sermon Series: “Strengthening Your Grip”—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—5/26/2002

Title: “Strengthening Your Grip on Purity”

Text: 1 Thessalonians 4: 1-5 & Matthew 15: 15-19

Intro.: *Ills. Confused Morality*

Theme: Purity is not just for Puritans but is one of the distinguishing marks of the child of God who has been saved by Jesus from destructive lifestyles of immorality to the powerful freedom of holiness.

### What a “pure life” looks like

?? It is a way of life

#### 1. **ILLS.: HONESTY WITHOUT INTEGRITY**

2. Paul says, “*It is necessary for you to conduct your life in a way pleasing to God.*” vs. 1 — not living the lie

?? It is excelling in godliness not in worldliness

1. What do you excel in and what do you have to do to excel? (time, commitment, focus, clear schedules)

2. Excel in godliness and purity (choices, things you won’t visit, see, do)

#### 1. **ILLS.: quote from Swindol’s book on “Strengthening your Grip”**

2. “*Make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” 2 Pt 1:5-8

### How to live “purely”

?? Purity is a conscious choice

1. Pleasing God rather than pleasing yourself (vs. 1)

1. “*So we make it our goal to please him...for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ*” 2Cor5:9-10

2. Choosing life rather than choosing death

1. “*I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life.*” Deut. 30:19

?? Purity is hard work

3. Prepare for a war ahead

1. Know the enemy without

?? “*Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but...spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*” Eph6:11-12

#### ?? **ILLS.: Hard being a virgin**

2. Know the enemy within

?? “*Out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.*”(19)

#### ?? **ILLS.: Separating the Wicked from the Good**

4. Focus your energies (*physically, emotionally, spiritually*)

1. Paul used words like “abstain, restrain, seize control”(1 Thessalonians 4: 3,4)

2. Jesus is able and powerful to help you and me in our weakest moments of temptation to resist, flee, and stand

?? Purity is giving your heart to Jesus

5. Because he first gave you his “*I have been crucified with Christ...I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*” Galatians 2:20

6. Because only he can forgive your heart of the past foolish and immoral mess

1. “*Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders...will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*” 1 Cor. 6: 9-11

2. Maybe your past is smudged with sexual sins or knee-deep in it in the present ---- Jesus can and will

forgive you

7. Because only he can change your heart

1. As Lord of your life

?? *“For you know what commandments we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.”(4:2)*

2. As Savior of your life

?? *“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.” Titus 2: 11-14*

**Confused Morality**

I always scoffed at the idea of a generation gap--until recently, that is. While talking to my pre-teen daughter, I mentioned how important it was to be chaste. "But why, Mom?" she asked. "I'd rather do the chasing myself instead of being chased."

**Honesty Without Integrity**

Charles Swindoll, in *Growing Deep in the Christian Life*, tells about a man who bought fried chicken dinners for himself and his date late one afternoon. The attendant at the fast food outlet, however, inadvertently gave him the proceeds from the day's business--a bucket of money (much of it cash) instead of fried chicken. Swindoll writes: "After driving to their picnic site, the two of them sat down to enjoy some chicken. They discovered a whole lot more than chicken--over \$800! But he was unusual. He quickly put the money back in the bag. They got back into the car and drove all the way back. By then, the manager was frantic. "Mr. Clean got out, walked in, and became an instant hero. 'I want you to know I came by to get a couple of chicken dinners and wound up with all this money here.' "Well, the manager was thrilled to death. He said, 'Let me call the newspaper. I'm gonna have your picture put in the local paper. You're one of the most honest men I've ever heard of.' "To which the man quickly responded, 'Oh, no. No, no, don't do that!' Then he leaned closer and whispered, 'You see, the woman I'm with--she's, uh, somebody else's wife.' " ***One can be honest and still not have integrity.***

**Strengthening your grip quote**

“With the Holy Spirit now working in us, we have the power to resist, the power to say “NO!” We can take an alternate route instead of the one that passes by the adult video store. We can grocery shop without stopping at the magazine stand to ogle the covers. We can say, “No, I’m married,” or “No, I’m waiting until marriage,” when we’re tempted to compromise our purity for a flash of passion. . . We need to research that movie before rushing off to the theater—read some reviews, talk to others who have seen it. The same goes for television shows and music. We need to do more than just watch and listen. We need to ask whether we *should* watch and listen. That’s not legalism; that’s wisdom. We’re not suggesting a boycott of all movies and music. But each one of us should know our limits and weaknesses and avoid anything that trips us up in our walk with Christ, keeping our eyes fixed on Him. (p. 24)

**Hard to be a virgin**

My 5-year-old niece, Olivia, and her best friend, Claire, were participating in a nativity play at school. Claire was playing Mary, and Olivia was an angel. Before the show, a young boy was going around the dressing room repeating, "I'm a sheep, what are you?" Each child responded politely, including Olivia, who proudly declared she was an angel. The boy then turned to Claire, still struggling into her costume with her mother's help, and repeated the question to her: "I'm a sheep, what are you?" Claire simply said, "I'm Mary." Realizing he was face to face with a lead character, he felt he needed to justify his own role. "It's hard being a sheep, you know," he said with all the seriousness of a 5-year-old actor with a big part. Claire's equally serious response was humorously profound. "Yes," said Claire innocently, "but it's also hard being a virgin, you know."

**Separating the Wicked from the Good**

Russian writer Alexandr Solzhenitsyn said, "If only there were evil people somewhere, insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?"

**1 Thes. 4:1-5**

Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to excel more and more. <sup>2</sup>For you know what commands we gave you by the authority of the Lord Jesus.

<sup>3</sup>It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should restrain yourself from sexual immorality; <sup>4</sup>that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, <sup>5</sup>not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; [NIV]

### **Matthew 15:15-19**

Peter said, "Explain the parable to us."

<sup>16</sup>"Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. <sup>17</sup>"Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? <sup>18</sup>But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' <sup>19</sup>For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. [NIV]