

**Mark 8: 34-38; "Your Bedroom of Christian Discipleship" (Part 2), Sermon # 60
in the series - "Astonished at His Teaching", Delivered on January 31st, 2010,
in the Morning Worship Service.**

We have been looking at your bedroom of Christian Discipleship. We have seen that it is a room where you will find rest and pleasures in relation to both spirit and body as you trust and follow the Lord Jesus Christ. There is spiritual rest found in trusting in Jesus. There is a rest of the soul of the disciple who leans upon the Lord Jesus. It is a rest which we work from. In all of our labors for the Lord Jesus, we work from that vantage point of His finished work; of His perfect obedience to the Law, and His offering up of Himself on the cross for our sins. We who believe have entered in to this rest. (Hebrews 4: 3) It is a rest which brings peace to our heart and mind, even when we are laboring long and hard for Him; even when we are serving Him or others around us. It is a rest which takes pleasure in all that the Lord Jesus has done for us, and all that He is doing and will do for us, by the strength of His grace. His grace brings us pleasure. The pleasures of a Christian disciple are the highest and best of all pleasures, far surpassing the pleasures which the people of this world are pursuing with all of their many entertainments. But I say to you, as we begin this morning; the true Christian disciple does not always understand this truth right away when they are converted. It is given to them in a promise form, and they must by faith live in accordance with the promise. "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free," Jesus says. "And you shall be free indeed." When you come to Jesus you have been set free from that law of sin and death that held you captive in your heart. You are set free from the condemnation of the Law and the wrath of God which is coming upon all the unrighteous and ungodly people of this world. But in the heart of every true believer in Jesus Christ, there remains just enough of the influence of the Old Man, the old life and habits of sin; that some believers do not engage in holy war against their sinful tendencies as much as they should when they first become a Christian. I am not excusing them; I am describing them. Instead of valiantly going out to do battle with their worldly perspectives that they once so loved; they will sometimes try to see if they can hold on to some of the sinful pleasures of the world; not understanding that God has something much, much better in mind. But if they are truly Christ's, He will see to it that they are changed; that they will have a new love, and live with different desires from that of the ungodly.

Some Christians may begin the Christian life thinking that if they just have the spiritual parchment roll of the truth; that if all their sins have been forgiven; that since faith in that one truth of Christ dying on the cross will be enough to bring them to heaven; that they then do not need to pursue the other blessing of the New Covenant, which is sanctification. Salvation is all of the Lord; you may know that; but do you know the difference between justification and sanctification? The blessing of justification is not a blessing that the Christian disciple works at. It is something that Christ worked for, and gave His life for. Justification is God's declaring the sinner righteous when they trust in the Lord Jesus. They are justified freely through Jesus' blood and righteousness. All their sins are forgiven for Jesus sake and they are clothed with a perfect righteousness which is not their own. But sanctification is something that the Christian disciple must work hard at, if he or she would glorify God. Our pleasures must change if God is to be glorified; and we must want them to change; away from sinful pleasures; or we are no Christian. No, it is the Christian's pleasure to really want to change and to really want to learn experientially what true love is. It is their pleasure to have fellowship with their Lord, and they come to know that this relationship with Christ is better and more satisfying than anything that this fallen world has to offer. This is what we began to

look at last week. We saw this last Sunday; that your bedroom of Christian Discipleship exists as a great and good part of your discipleship for 3 specific reasons. It exists because you need to learn to rest in Jesus, and to know spiritual rest in Him at all times, and physical rest at the right times. It exists secondly because the Christian life is a life lived to God's pleasure, and He gives holy pleasures to His dear children to experience; whether they are married or whether they remain single all of their life. He may give them a person to share their journey through this life with. Or He may give a gift to a person; the gift to remain single all their days. Now this morning I want to make my applications concerning this 2nd point which I began to make last week; and then I want to go on to the third reason that the Bedroom of Christian Discipleship exists; that of a Christian's need of private and secret prayer.

So turn back with me now to 1 Corinthians 7, verse 1 again with me. "Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman." "Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband." "Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband." "The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does." "Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." "But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment." "For I wish that all men were even as I myself." "But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that." "But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: it is good for them if they remain even as I am, but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry." "For it is better to marry than to burn with passion." Now, I want you to notice that Paul does not describe the sexual act in marriage here in sensual, lurid, or crude terms. He describes it as "rendering affection which is due" to the person whom you are to exclusively show this kind of affection to; that is your husband or your wife. Each man is to have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. You are to show sexual affection exclusively to that person. Why? Because marriage is the possession of that person whom you are married to in every holy way. This includes the sexual relationship. You are not your own physically in marriage. You belong to another. You are one-flesh with them. Sex in marriage; which is the only place that it is legitimate; is not so much getting something. It is giving of yourself; your affection first; and then your body in a way that pleases your spouse in a holy way. You are not a beast; you are a man. Although some women may have it in their minds that all men are beasts. And I think that I can understand that. But there is a self-control which exists by grace, in a believing person's heart, that he or she will exercise self-control even in this; the marital relationship. That self-control, is based upon the relationship with Christ. It is based upon the desire which the true disciple has in their heart to honor God, and obey God, and trust God in relation to what they do in every situation with their body. A disciple doesn't put his arms around another man's wife. He doesn't gaze upon a virgin. If he is a single man he may realize immorality at work in his heart, and the desires of the body are strong. Sometimes they find themselves burning with passion, but the believing person will strive for the mastery over the desires of the body. That is the self-control here mentioned. If there is sin mixed in which legitimate desires of the body and spirit for marriage; the sin will be confessed and cast out of the mind, by the grace of Christ.

This is how you Christ would have you to live, dear young person. The mind is not meant to run wild in sexual things before marriage. It is meant to be controlled and directed to the love of the Lord and the love of His word. It is meant to be thoughtfully considering how God can be glorified by your desires and your holy passions, and how other people can be viewed and helped by your works of holy love. The Christian disciple strives to give himself or herself to the things that the Lord would have them to think upon, whether they are married or

whether they are single. "As a man thinks in his heart; so is he." The married person thinks upon the pure, the true, the lovely, and the right in relation to both his Lord and his wife. The unmarried person thinks upon the true, the honorable the lovely, and the right in relation to Christ and in relation to all the other people of the opposite sex around them. Holy purity is the issue and it is the goal, but the goal cannot be attained without faith in Christ. It cannot be attained not without desire and relationship to Christ. Listen to the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 1, verse 12 and following. "And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and and insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." "And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus." The Lord enabled Paul to minister to him by the power of His exceeding abundant grace. And even Paul's faith and love were something that came into existence, were sustained and developed in relation to Christ's giving him grace. He was much different before, but Christ changed his desires.(In this part of the sermon many portions are taken from the last sermon; parts which were not preached in the last message.)

Now Paul is saying here, in 1 Corinthians 7, that from his perspective it is decidedly preferable to be single. When you think about this, you can see that he is saying here is that there are pleasures in spiritual things which go beyond the physical and the sexual, even in this life; and which satisfy even more than the physical and sexual. Otherwise, he would never commend the single life in the way that he does in terms of useful service to Christ and His kingdom. If you are single, it is not good to burn with passion. You need to be prayerful and watchful over your heart in relation to guarding it from sinful sexual desires. You need to realize that sex is not a dirty thing; God created it. But He created it in relation to your ultimate fulfillment of doing His will here upon the earth. This is your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality. And this is your sanctification; that you would love Him with all of your heart. God in giving you your sexuality has given you something which goes far beyond the obvious; far beyond the casual, assuming, and sensual desires which fallen men and women of the world have in relation to their sexuality. He has given you the power of purity; the power to establish all that is good and lovely and true in this gift of how you will use your sexuality, or not use it. And this is something which every true Christian has to discover for themselves and learn to despise those thoughts and feelings which would sinfully lower the beauty and glory of marital love; or take away the beauty and strength of a person remaining single their whole life for the right reasons. Being single for life is no less beautiful and glorious than getting married and having all the pleasures of the marital relation, if Christ and His glory and doing His will from a heart satisfied with His grace is the motive. The Apostle Paul says, "I wish that all men were even as myself." (That is; that they were single, and so satisfied and taken up with desires for Christ; that they needed not to get married.) This was a great gift; and not all have it.

And so I believe from my study of Scripture that what is meant to take the place of sinful sexual desires in the person who is single, leading up to marriage, or if they never get married, is spiritual and holy desires related to Christ. It is what Jonathan Edwards called, "the Religious Affections". We have to ask ourselves; If attaining to physical marriage; the two becoming one flesh is the best and highest state to be in, in this life; then why will there not also be physical marriage in heaven? For there will not be physical marriage in heaven. But there will be spiritual marriage in heaven; marriage of the Church to Christ; the marriage of the Betrothed to her Beloved; the joy of the Bride and the Bridegroom. In that day, Jesus says, there will not be marrying and giving in marriage, but we shall be like the angels in the sense of our sexuality. There will not be any need for physical sexual expression there. There will be no need to make babies, and there will be no need to express ourselves in that holy

way physically; to continue on in the physical married state in heaven, because the type will have become the fulfillment in our seeing; and our joy of being with; our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of that revelation of Christ to us, there will actually be something far more exciting and enjoyable. We will have physical bodies; glorified bodies, but the spiritual pleasures in relation to what we will be doing with those physical glorified bodies will far outstrip the physical pleasures which we now convey to our husband or wife sexually, in this life. Something much, much greater and much more satisfying is coming. What is coming will be a world without any mixture of sin with our righteousness. There will be no immoralities any longer. All the people whom the Lord saves in this life will become, in that Day, perfectly holy, and as it says in Psalm 16, verse 13 - "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore." We are Christ's Bride, as the Church of Jesus Christ, and we will know such great and holy spiritual intimacy with Him that we will be eagerly caught up with Him for all of eternity. It will not be boring in the World to come. It will be soul-ravishing in the most holy sense of that term.

If this is the case, my brethren, how important it is to pursue the spiritual things of Christ while here upon the earth. Whether we are married or unmarried, to bring every thought, every desire to Jesus and to ask, "Is this right, Lord?" "Is what I am doing with my spirit and my body in terms of my sexuality, right in the sight of God and Christ who are always with me? You have nothing to be ashamed of if you realize that all that you are thinking about sexually is thought of in relation to your wife. You have nothing to be ashamed about in terms of your sexual hopes and desires if they do not involve your imagining yourself with many people and many partners. You, instead, are saving all those thoughts and desires to express to the one whom you will give yourself in marriage to. And as a single person, who is thinking about the person that you will eventually marry, there is no need to touch that person physically and sexually before marriage. Just because you are thinking about the possibility of marriage does not give you the license, either in dating or in courtship to touch them. You needn't act like a married couple physically, before marriage, while you are courting or dating. You might change your mind as you get to know that person as time goes on and you learn more about what they are like. And that relationship might indeed come to an end and then you find yourself ashamed of what you have done together physically, thinking that you would most certainly marry. I hope that each young person here this morning and every person desiring to marry would know this; and greatly desire that it should be so; that it is your companionship which together which will be the most important and enduring thing in your marriage. That is where true holy love will be developed. It is a love that will always be self controlled in a gracious sense. This is what should and will be cultivated during that time before marriage if you are wise. There is no guilt in spending time cultivating the interests of the mind and heart in relation to Jesus. If you have the Lord Jesus, there is enough grace to satisfy the soul and control the body until you marry. It is there that you will lovingly give yourself at the right time in marriage. That will be God's time of blessing to you. And how useful you can be to Him, until that time, because you chose this for Christ's sake, whether you marry or whether you are single all your life.

Now 3rdly and finally, I want to go on to give to you the third reason that the Bedroom of Christian Discipleship exists; that of a Christian's need of private and secret prayer. Turn with me to Psalm 4. Here we have the prayer of David, a man after God's own heart. We here him praying and crying out to God - "Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness!" "You have relieved me in my distress; have mercy on me, and hear my prayer." Let us pause here, and set the stage for all that we will see as we go down through this psalm. God is the God of our righteousness. He is the One who has given us grace through our Lord Jesus Christ, and He is the One who works all good, all right dispositions, all righteous attitudes, all inclinations

and motivations within us to do good works and thus be pleasing to Him. He is the One who relieves us in our distress as we have many situations in life; especially with people; especially in regard to people in our immediate family, or among our relatives that bring distress to our heart and mind and soul. It is the better part of wisdom on the part of a disciple to learn to pray, and to learn to pray this way. "Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer." Timothy Dwight says, "Mercy is the exercise of God's good will towards those who have not merited it, and especially towards those who have merited anger and punishment." Let us always remember that God's having mercy on us is not because of anything we have done, but solely because of what Christ has done, being our substitute for our sins. David knew that God was the God of his righteousness, and God was the God who had shown him mercy. But here he would beg further mercy, and beg an audience of God for his prayers. A disciple of the Lord Jesus must be doing the same thing. Do not rest in your following the Lord Jesus on what you have done or accomplished before. Let us understand that God would have us to pray to Him for further and larger blessings and greater measures of grace.

This is very necessary for every disciple; to learn to pray; as there are so many people in the world who will turn your glory to shame and God's glory to shame, also, if they can. Verse 2 says, "How long, O you sons of men, will you turn my glory to shame?" "How long will you love worthlessness and seek falsehood?" "Selah". This is definitely something that we need to pause and to think about. It is amazing how many people love worthless things and seek to believe lies about the meaning of life; and about the Christians that they know. David reminds himself of this and would even tell those who were seeking his life that they were doing so. Remember when David was being chased by Saul? Why were Saul and his men chasing David and seeking his life? It was because Saul was envious of the praise which David had received after he slew the Philistine, and thought that David would end up King over Israel because he was so well loved by the people. David was chased around in the wilderness and when he had a chance given to him by God to speak to Saul about the unrighteousness that he was doing; he did so. 1 Samuel 24, verse 11 says, "Moreover, my father, see?" "Yes, see the corner of your robe in my hand!" "For in that I cut off the corner of your robe, and did not kill you, know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you." "Yet you hunt my life to take it." "Let the Lord judge between you and me, and let the Lord avenge me on you." "But my hand shall not be against you." Verse 14 says, "After whom has the king of Israel come out? "Whom do you pursue?" "A dead dog?" "A flea?" "Therefore let the Lord be judge, and judge between you and me, and see and plead my case, and deliver me out of your hand." Saul would turn David's glory; his strength, his wisdom and his ability to kill the greatest of the enemies of Saul and Israel; he would turn it into shame. He would convince himself and others that David was an evil, ambitious man; when he was really a patriot and a godly man. This is loving worthlessness and seeking falsehood. But David would remind all who would listen that the Lord had set him apart to be godly. This is the purpose of a righteous man's being godly. It is so that show forth the fact that God is holy; God is sovereign, and God is for the believer and will give him all the spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ. God will deliver him from every evil work, and bring him safely to His heavenly kingdom. People around us need to know why we do the things that we do. We should not be afraid to tell them. "But know that the Lord has set apart for Himself him who is godly; the Lord will hear when I call to Him."

Then David addresses his own heart in the presence of God. And here is where the bedroom of Christian discipleship comes in. Verse 4 - "Be angry, and do not sin." "Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still" "Selah." "Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord." This is what the Christian disciple should do; this is how he should act, when people around him are trying to bring him down from his being a godly

person, and living in a godly way. He should be angry with a righteous anger, but he should not sin. The anger of man will not accomplish the righteousness of God. But a righteous anger is appropriate; when despite your best efforts to convince others of the right way to think and live; they still persevere in their ungodliness. David's problem was compounded by the fact that Saul was the man in authority; he was the king of Israel. He was angry, but he did not sin, and take matters into his own hands to overthrow the authority that God had put in place. He was angry, but he did not sin. How could he come to the place where he was so spiritually strong? It was that he "meditated within his heart upon his bed, and he was still." "He offered the sacrifices of righteousness and put his trust in the Lord." In other words, he prayed upon his bed and dealt with any sinful anger that he might have had there. He would not take his own revenge. He would not take matters into his own hands, in terms of justice. He would trust in the sovereignty of the Lord, that the Lord would protect him and keep him from being killed by Saul.

Let me ask you, my friends, whether you have had these kind of experiences in the Bedroom of Christian discipleship? Do you meditate within your heart on your bed? Are you still; knowing that God is God and that He is with you and for you in all the situations in which you are putting your trust in Him? Do you praise Him even in the awkward situations of life? You know; it is good to learn to do this if you have not. When you learn this holy discipline of praying on your bed, you will have the confidence that you will need when the unbelieving people around you are saying, "Who will show us any good?" You will simply be upon your bed in the night praying, and saying, "Lord, lift up the light of Your countenance upon us." And you will be able also to say, when you see how He undertakes for you: "You have put gladness in my heart, more than in the season that their grain and wine increased." Your pleasures and your rest will be truly established more than any worldly person's sense of rest and peace are established by a good harvest crop. You will be able to rest at night, and you will be able to sleep sweetly because your conscience is clear in relation to God and men. "I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O Lord, make me to dwell in safety."