

Text: I Corinthians 6:12-20

Title: “Moral Matters ... Purity” Pt.2

INTRODUCTION

We’ve been talking about moral matters. There’s so much confusion today about where the lines are drawn as far as our behavior is concerned. And it’s particularly confusing when it comes to sexual purity because of the radically different messages we get from the world and from God’s Word. How are we as believers to live morally upright lives when we are surrounded with immorality on every hand? Well you cannot read the Bible without coming away with the unmistakable conclusion that God wants His people to steer clear of sexual immorality.

Ephesians 5:3 (NIV) - But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.

Morals matter for the people of God because we are the people of God. Turn with me to I Corinthians 6. Now we saw last week that the teaching on sexual purity here in I Corinthians 6:12-20 is anchored to two imperatives or commands in the original language. And these two commands are connected.

TWO CONNECTED COMMANDS

COMMAND #1 - 1 Corinthians 6:18a (NIV) - Flee from sexual immorality.

Some people look at that straightforward command and ask, “Isn’t that a bit unrealistic? After all, we are all sexual creatures and the world is constantly pushing us to satisfy those desires anytime and with anyone. What’s the big deal?”

Then people play a kind of game that goes like this: “I know it’s wrong to ‘go all the way.’ But what about everything short of that? Isn’t that OK?” Or, “I know it’s wrong to have sex with someone who isn’t my spouse, but what about looking at a little pornography from time to time? Surely that’s OK.”

ILLUSTRATION – Some of us remember when they made the speed limit 55 mph back in the 1970’s. So here we are with cars that can certainly go a lot faster, driving on highways that were built for greater speeds than 55 mph. But people quickly realized that if the sign said Speed Limit 55, they could easily drive 60 without much fear of getting a ticket, and certainly without any physical risk. And while there was a greater chance of getting a ticket at 70 miles per hour, there was still no real danger at driving that fast. Now driving 80-90 miles an hour was a different story. That’s way too fast. And no one should drive that fast.

Unfortunately, that’s the way that people think of sin, particularly sexual sin. They think that viewing pornography is really the same as driving 60 in a 55 zone. "There’s no harm in that, is there?" Or maybe someone might rank pornography as a 90 mph sin. But the occasional, lustful glances at a woman (or man) on the street? Oh, that’s just a 60 mph sin.

Oh church, understand this: God's standard of purity is not an arbitrary sexual speed limit. If He says the limit is 55, that's what He means. God doesn't say so 55 hoping that we will stay below 60. God's standards are there for a reason: Sexual immorality is bad for us! God loves us and knows that "going 56 in a 55 zone" of sexual morals will eventually hurt us.

So you see God's wisdom in commanding us to flee sexual immorality. Now typically, we simply leave it at that. Run from it. Just say no. But we saw last week that there's another command here in these verses that gives the child of God an even greater and higher calling.

COMMAND #2 – 1 Corinthians 6:20b (NIV) – Therefore honor God with your body.

Note: Basically, the first command applies to believers and non-believers. It's important counsel to everyone whether they love God or not. But the second command is an even higher calling. It provides the greatest motivation for obeying the first command.

The way to live our lives is to honor God with our bodies. We have a body for one reason: to be an instrument for glorifying and honoring God. What we do with our bodies should communicate praise and glory to our God.

The word "body," that appears seven times in this passage, is an important word. It's not just this sack of bones and muscle and organs. The word refers to the whole of your existence ... the visible and the invisible ... the material and the immaterial ... the physical and the spiritual.

So we are to flee sexual immorality and to honor God with our bodies. But why?

FOUR ESSENTIAL REASONS:

We saw the first one last week...

1. BECAUSE OF GOD'S CREATION OF OUR BODIES (vv.12-13)

Read vv.12-13. We can sum up this reason in the words of the last part of v.13:

1 Corinthians 6:13b (NIV) - The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

Now the Corinthians were Greeks, and the Greek way of looking at things considered everything physical, including the body, to be basically evil and of no value. What was done with, or to, the body didn't matter.

"Sex is no different from eating. The stomach was made for food, and the body was made for sex. It's all biology. There you have it. So sleep with anyone you like."

No! God didn't create our bodies for sexual immorality but for the Himself. And God is for the body.

God says, “I know you have sexual desires. I wired your body that way. And I have a way for those desires to be satisfied ... in a marriage relationship between a husband and wife. Trust me on this.”

But there’s more. Not just the way God created us, but also ...

2. BECAUSE OF THE RESURRECTION OF OUR BODIES (v.14)

Now we have in v.14 a reminder of one of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith.

1 Corinthians 6:14 (NIV) - By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also.

So what in the world does this have to do with sexual purity? Well, this teaches us the value that God places on our bodies. Don’t think that what you do with your body doesn’t matter.

Our bodies are so basic to who we are as humans that when Christ returns and ushers in the Kingdom of Heaven for eternity, God will give us resurrection bodies with which to inhabit eternity.

You see, it is a grave error to think that God only cares about our souls, but not about our bodies. When we are raised from the dead God will raise us as bodily beings, just like He did for Jesus.

So if God has this in mind for the bodies He has created, we cannot treat our bodies like paper plates and cups. You use them, then wash them up and throw them away. That’s the way some people treat their bodies through sexual sin, through drug and alcohol use, and any number of other ways that we disregard the importance of our bodies.

But it goes even deeper. We flee sexual immorality and honor God with our bodies ...

3. BECAUSE OF OUR CONNECTION WITH THE LORD (vv.15-19a)

Now let me read the next few verses and explain what the Scripture teaches here.

1 Corinthians 6:15a (NIV) - Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?

When we are saved, Jesus Christ actually takes up residence in our bodies by His Holy Spirit. The church is called the Body of Christ, and in a very real way, every individual believer is connected to Jesus Christ, bodily.

So what we do with our bodies, we do with Jesus. Our bodies matter because they are united with Christ.

Remember that the culture in Corinth was saturated with sexual immorality. And prostitution was as common as convenience stores in our city. Some Christians had no problem engaging in this kind of “casual sex.” But sex outside of marriage for the child of God is never casual.

Paul asks this incredulous question in v.15: **Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute?**

Answer: **“Never!”**

By the way, the word “take” literally means “to take away” or “steal.” Your body belongs to Christ. When you engage in sexual immorality, you are stealing something that belongs to Him. The explanation of our body’s connection with Christ continues:

1 Corinthians 6:16 (NIV) - Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.”

Note: Don’t make the mistake here of thinking that sexual sin only happens when someone engages in sex with a prostitute ... someone who is paid for their services. That just happens to be a very specific application for the Corinthians. The principle is much broader to include sexual relations with anyone outside of marriage.

Now Paul’s reference to “one flesh” takes us back to Genesis and to God’s intention in creation of a permanent union between a man and a woman. Jesus taught this principle as well. God intends for a husband and wife to become one. And the physical oneness that comes with sex is powerful. It is the expression of the spiritual and emotional oneness that husbands and wives are to enjoy.

And when a man or a woman engages in sex outside of marriage, he or she is taking something that God intended to cement a lasting union between a husband and wife, and corrupting it in a moment of sensual pleasure.

So in sexual immorality, two people become one in body. But remember for the Christian...

1 Corinthians 6:17 (NIV) - But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

So, in a mysterious way, what happens when the child of God sins sexually is that the precious Lord Jesus Christ is dragged into the sordid moment.

So here we are again at the first command we read earlier:

1 Corinthians 6:18a (NIV) - Flee from sexual immorality.

It’s interesting that for other sins we are told to fight and to overcome. But with sexual immorality we are to flee. We kid ourselves if we think we can play with sexual immorality, then just stop short of outright sin.

As we read on we see an even deeper consequence of sexual immorality:

v.18b - All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.

This tells us that while sexual sin is not necessarily the worst sin, it is certainly the most unique sin. There is a power to this kind of sin that is unlike any other. It affects our bodies like no other sin. It has an internally destructive quality to it, like no other sin. Because sexual intimacy unites two people in the deepest way possible, to use sex outside of marriage corrupts us at the deepest human level.

You might consider sex the “crown jewels” of a relationship.

ILLUSTRATION – Nan and I had the opportunity this summer to view Britain’s crown jewels in the Tower of London. These are some amazingly beautiful and unbelievably valuable pieces of jewelry. But suppose that Prince William decides one day that it would be fun to wear the crown jewels out to a party with his friends. Well, that would be ridiculous. One day, at the right time, the crown jewels may be his to wear, but for the glorious moment he has to wait.

In the same way sexual intimacy must be saved for the right time and the right place. That time and place is within Christian marriage.

Now remember we’re talking about one of the main reasons we honor God with our bodies is because of the connection we have with Christ. And here we see how practically that happens:

1 Corinthians 6:19 (NIV) - Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?

God didn’t just save your soul. He saved you ... body, soul and spirit. And your body becomes a temple, a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit. Isn’t that powerful?

So when we engage in sexual immorality, sin is entering into the domain where the Spirit of God lives. It’s totally incompatible.

Now we come to the most profound reason for us to honor God with our bodies...

4. BECAUSE OF GOD’S REDEMPTION OF OUR BODIES (v.19b-20)

1 Corinthians 6:19b-20 (NIV) - You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

Now we have before us a picture of a horrible scene ... human beings were bought and sold on the slave market in ancient times. And yet the most despicable slavery is slavery to sin. And we are all slaves to sin before Christ redeems us. And God becomes our Master ... body and soul.

We were bought with a price. And the price that was paid was the body of God's own Son, Jesus Christ, crucified for our sins on the Cross of Calvary.

When Christ paid the debt for us to go free, he paid not just for our soul ... but for our body as well. God purchased the whole bundle ... body and soul.

And that is the great motivation behind the command: "Therefore honor God with your body."

CONCLUSION

Now I realize statistics tell us that a great number of people who sit in churches on Sunday mornings in America have been engaged in some kind of sexual immorality. And you may be wondering, "What does Jesus think of me?"

I'll just remind you of story we're told in the Gospels of a woman who was involved in sexual immorality. The religious leaders dragged her before Jesus and said, "The Law demands that we stone her to death. What do you think, Jesus?" And the way Jesus treats this woman is amazing. He hands a stone to the accusers and says, "Alright, you who is without sin cast the first stone." And one by one they all walked away. Then Jesus turned to ask the woman, "Where are your accusers?" She says, "There are none." Jesus replies, "Neither do I condemn you. God and sin no more." Notice Jesus didn't sugar coat her problem. He calls it sin. But He gives her the hope of forgiveness, cleansing, and a new life.