

Text: I Corinthians 6:12-20

Title: “Moral Matters ... Purity”

INTRODUCTION

Open your Bibles to I Corinthians 6:12. We’re talking about moral matters. There’s so much confusion today about where the lines are drawn as far as our behavior is concerned. How are we as believers to live morally upright lives when we are surrounded with immorality on every hand? Our ancient brothers and sisters in Corinth had a similar dilemma. Unfortunately they weren’t doing very well. Just to get the full sweep of the matter, let’s read vv.12-20. Read text.

ILLUSTRATION – What we have to talk about this morning is no laughing matter, particularly when we think about the pain that comes into the lives of persons and families when sexual immorality happens. But I couldn’t help but chuckle when I read about a letter to the editor that came to the newspaper in response to an editorial that contended that abortion on demand must remain legal until a perfect contraceptive was found. The letter to the editor reads as follows:

“I am happy to report that there are at least two methods of contraception that are 100% effective. The first is made by several manufacturers. This amazing breakthrough is called clothes. They are available over the counter and without a prescription. People who don’t want children should wear them. The second is an oral contraceptive. You must form your lips and tongue the right way, breathe out, and the word ‘no’ is sounded. People who choose not to use the above methods and, instead engage in an act that was designed to create human life should stop being so surprised when a human life is created by their actions.”

As believers most of us know that God puts a very high premium on what we do with our bodies. But we also know that when we stand for moral purity, we are standing against what seems to be an overwhelming tide of opposition.

We live in a world that bombards us with message that sex outside of marriage is perfectly acceptable? Messages like the ones sent in ...

- In the final episode of "Friends" a couple of years ago where there was a scene where Rachel suggests to Ross that "sleeping together is the perfect way to say good-bye."
- The pop-up that suddenly appears on your computer screen
- The illicit conversations that happen around the office of who is sleeping whom.
- Music videos and movies that make sexual immorality seem to be perfectly natural.

As far as God’s Word and God’s will is concerned, it couldn’t be any clearer. In fact in the verses I read earlier we find ...

TWO CONNECTED COMMANDS

The first is a negative specific command. The second is a positive general command.

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

Here's what you're to do when faced with temptation in this realm. Flee, and keep on fleeing until the danger is passed. Don't argue or debate or explain or rationalize. Don't think you're strong enough to meet the challenge. Run away from it.

“Sexual immorality” is the Gk word *porneia*. And it covers every kind of sexual immorality. It means any kind of sexual activity outside of the marriage relationship.

The Corinthians were no strangers to sexual sin. It was a common part of the daily life of Corinth. Sexual promiscuity raged out of control in the city. It's very much like we see in our own culture.

Sexual sin is particularly harmful. It has so many built-in pitfalls, problems and pain. It has broken up more marriages, shattered more homes, caused more heartache and disease and destroyed more lives than alcohol and drugs combined. It leads to every other kind of sin you could imagine ... lying, cheating, stealing and even killing.

This command is clear...

- Business man, flee the sexual immorality that is so enticing when you're far away from home.
- Lonely wife, flee the sexual immorality that results from the relationship with a man who makes you feel good because he gives you the attention your husband doesn't.
- College student, flee the sexual immorality that is a rampant on college campuses.
- Stressed-out man, flee the sexual immorality found on the screen of your computer.
- Teenager, flee the sexual immorality that tempts you to give up your virginity before you're married.

Now typically, we simply leave it at that. Run from it. Just say no. But there's another command here in these verses that gives the child of God an even greater calling. I said these commands are connected, and they are.

The first command is negative and specifically pointed to sexual sins. The second command is positive and more general. If you can live obedient to the second command, the first command will not be a problem.

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

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.

Now seven times the word “body” is used here in this passage. And that word is very important, because it refers to the whole of your existence ... the visible and the invisible ... the material and the immaterial ... the physical and the spiritual.

The word for “body” here means the entire bundle of our existence in this world ... our whole personality. There's a sense in which you do not *have* a body ... you *are* a body. If you don't

get this, you will miss what God wants you to see here. The idea that you are different from your body is just not biblical. You cannot separate the body from the rest of you. So what you do with your body matters.

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

FOUR ESSENTIAL REASONS:

(I'll cover the first one today, and the rest next week.)

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

In the beginning we see God creating every aspect of the universe ... the big stuff and the little stuff. And the crowning act of creation was when God created the first human, Adam. Then He created the first woman, Eve.

And as God created the other parts of the universe and the earth He said, "This is good ... this is good." And guess what? When God created the first humans bodies He said, "This is good."

Christians sometimes think that everything that is enjoyable to the human body must be bad. Has it occurred to you that God created you with a body that enjoys food and the other pleasures of life? He created us with desire, hunger and thirst ... and He provided a legitimate way for all of those desires to be satisfied.

Now the problem is that the Corinthians were taking this to an extreme. There were people who thought that because their souls were saved, it didn't matter what they did with their bodies. They were all about freedom. That's what we see in v.12.

1 Corinthians 6:12 (NIV) - "Everything is permissible for me"—but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"—but I will not be mastered by anything.

"Everything is permissible to me..." That was a well-known proverb that circulated in the church at that time. The NIV captures this with the quotation marks.

"Everything is permissible for me..." That may be the way the world looks at it. But we are governed by a higher law as believers.

- **v.12 – "Not everything is beneficial."** The word there means "profitable" or "advantageous." There is nothing advantageous about sexual immorality.
- **v.12 – "I will not be mastered (controlled) by anything."** How many times have we seen people take a legitimate desire that God has built into our bodies, go after it, and before long they are controlled by it. It's called addiction.

Now look at the next verse:

1 Corinthians 6:13 (NIV) - “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food”—but God will destroy them both. 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. Food was food, the stomach was the stomach, and sex was sex. They were all just biological functions to satisfy their appetites and desires.

They believed that the most important part of man was the spiritual part. And what you did with the body had nothing to do with the spirit.

And here is where we come to the idea of the creation of God. God created the whole body, physical and spiritual. And what we do with one affects the other.

There apparently was another proverb popular in the day that said, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food.” And Corinthians were using it to justify sexual immorality. They were saying something like this: “Sex is no different from eating. The stomach was made for food, and the body was made for sex. There you have it. So sleep with anyone you like.”

Paul stops them. Yes, food and the stomach were made for each other. But that part of your life is purely temporal. There will be a day for the believer when we will not need food. It will not be part of our existence in heaven ... no need for food or for stomachs to digest food, at least in the way we do here in this life.

v.13 - God will destroy them both.

But that doesn't mean that the body doesn't have an eternal perspective to it.

So God didn't create our bodies for sexual immorality but for the Himself. And He is for the body.

See that! God is for the body. That means that every desire that comes along with this body, physical or spiritual, has already been covered by God. He has provided a way for every desire to be met by Himself.

You have a desire for food. God has provided for that. You have a desire for love. God has provided for that. You have a desire for sexual fulfillment. God has provided for that in the relationship of a husband and a wife.

CONCLUSION

So the first reason for us to flee sexual immorality and to honor God with our bodies is that God has created our bodies to run on that fuel.

ILLUSTRATION – When I first got the car I am now driving I read in the owners manual that this car runs best when you don't use the cheapest grade of gasoline, but the better grade of gasoline.

And that really is true. One day I was in a hurry, and I wasn't paying attention, and I ended up putting the lowest grade gas in the gas tank. And for the next week that car didn't perform well. It sputtered and was sluggish. It was meant to run on a higher grade of fuel.

Child of God, that's the way we are to view our bodies. We were not meant to be sustained by the raw pleasures of this world. Can you hear God saying to you today:

“Dear child, you need more than food and more than sexual intimacy to make you really happy. You need Me. So when you enjoy a meal, thank Me for it; I'm the One who sustains your life. And when you enjoy intimacy with your mate, thank Me for it; I'm the One who sustains you. And when you're tempted to think I don't care about you, don't go looking for love in all the wrong places.”

God wants us to live our lives totally sustained by Him. He created us that way.