



Tainted Temples

Introduction:

Today's text is a tough one, so it is crucial that we come to it with the lens of grace AND truth. Jesus was never one sided – but always taught people with both loving-kindness and corrective instruction. It is also essential that we understand the context of Paul's words in this text, or it could be grossly misunderstood, and then misapplied. The primary issue (which few people realise when reading this text) that Paul addresses here is prostitution, which was widespread and culturally acceptable in Corinth. There were very few taboo areas within Corinthian sexual practice, which as believers, needed to be addressed and corrected. Our culture also has its own views on what is sexually appropriate, which contrasts to the lens scripture gives us, and so this text is just as relevant to us today, as it was to the church in Corinth 2000 years ago.

Today's Scripture Text

1 Corinthians 6:9-20

Sermon Points

Main Point: Jesus makes all people new. New people live in new ways.

#1. Sin is serious and ongoing engagement with it must be taken seriously

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-20 & Luke 17:1

The Corinthian church were still trying to figure out what it meant to live out the grace of God. Because of other religious influences, some believed that the body had no real value, and so it did not matter what one did with it, while others believed that because of the grace of God, they were free to indulge in any form of sin they wanted to, because they were forgiven. Both beliefs were distorted and led to sexual sin (among other sins) in the church. Paul wanted to remind them that as heirs of the Kingdom of God, it was unfitting for them to continue to live as if they were unbelievers, who had no eternal inheritance.

Being a believer means that we have a consciousness of the weightiness of sin against God, and a troubled conscience when we do sin. Jesus took sin very seriously. So much so that he chose to forgive sin, and ultimately paid the price for it with his own life.

For the unbeliever, sin is the biggest issue - and needs to be dealt with before Christ in repentance and faith. For the believer, sin is also the biggest issue, but it has been forgiven. The fact that Christ paid such a heavy price for sin, means we should not mess with or indulge in it, but instead should put it to death.



- ♣ In what way were the Corinthians misapplying the grace of God in the way they treated their sexuality?
- ♣ In which ways do we also fall into sin, and instead of having a conscience about it and putting it to death, just continue in it, because we know we are forgiven?
- ♣ In Corinthian culture, sexual expression outside of marriage was no big deal, which is why it was so difficult for the church to have to have to deal with it as sin. Which sins in the church today are we guilty of underplaying, and not taking seriously because they are culturally acceptable? (E.g. Some examples in our context might be gluttony, greed, pride, selfish ambition, gossip and slander. Think of the ones in your own life that are just part of “who you are and are not really seen as sin in your life).

#2. All sin is the same AND sexual sin is different

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:15-20

The scripture is clear that sexual immorality is wrong and that we need to avoid it completely. In this text, Paul tells the church to avoid sexual immorality, adultery and homosexual sexual-behavior, which is listed among other sins that separate us from God, such as bullying, extortion and greed. All sin is an affront to God. Paul does however, go on to explain the way in which sexual sin is unique because it is sin against our own bodies and the bodies of someone else. Our bodies are not our own. They belong to God, and so they should be treated as such.

This is in stark contrast to how the world views sex today. Sex is seen as both nothing AND everything:

- *Nothing* – people do not see sex as having any moral weight and so no one has any right to dictate who sleeps with who.
- *Everything* - people see their desire for sex as a physical need and a right which no one can undermine. This in turn puts huge pressure on the sexual compatibility of partners, because the need has been made central to relational success.

The Bible has a high view of sex – it is both valuable and risky, and therefore it has safe and healthy restrictions. As much as it is a blessing, it is also not seen as a necessity. Both Jesus and Paul remained single throughout their ministries and could live effective lives, even though sexual desire would have been present.

The reason that Paul attached such a high cost to sexual sin is because of God’s high view of the physical body:

- The body is for the Lord and the Lord for the body
- We are going to be bodily resurrected
- Our bodies are united to Christ

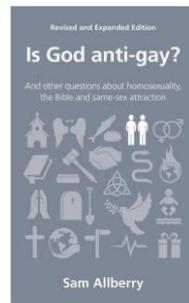
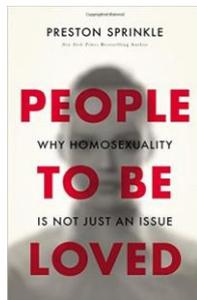
- ♣ In what way has the culture shaped your view on sex?
- ♣ What beliefs or attitudes towards sex do you need to repent of?



#3. The Bible defines sexual sin as all sex outside of biblically defined marriage

In this text, Paul describes 3 different ways in which we sin sexually:

- Sexual immorality - a catch all term (porneia) for all sex happening outside of the protective union of marriage.
- Adultery - having a spouse, but having sex with someone who isn't your spouse.
- Those who practice homosexuality – the words used in the Greek here refer to both partners involved in a sexual act, and not the cultural practice of “pederasty”. *(NB. Please do not make this the focus of your study. Without much study, along with grace and truth, we are likely to continue in unhelpful and grace-less assumptions. We have some suggested resources for your own personal study, and would recommend doing some hard work and prayerful reflection before attempting to theologically engage here. See below for some books to get you going. They are both available on Amazon for kindle, and the app is free on your phone.)*



To prepare us on how to go about understanding the scripture on the topic of homosexual union, we need to do the following:

- look at what the scriptures ACTUALLY say, as well as what they MEAN
- watch our language and make sure it displays both truth and grace
- strive to be more like Jesus and live lives full of grace and truth
- ♣ The church has been very guilty of being harmful and lacking in any empathy towards anyone in the LGBTQI community. This is a fact. Is this true of you personally – yes or no?
- ♣ Is your stance on the issue of homosexuality informed by scripture (having been studied and applied with grace and truth) or has it come from a prideful position that lacks any real substance, study or thoughtful consideration?

#4. To be really free, we need to be prepared to flee

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

Scripture tells us that in order to be free from sexual immorality, we need to flee from it, in all of its forms. This will most certainly put us at risk of being rejected in most social circumstances, because the world sees this as intolerance.

- ♣ Why do you think the world views our abstinence in sexual activity outside of marriage (including things like viewing porn and visiting strip clubs etc.) as a lack of tolerance?



- ♣ Have you ever experienced rejection because you had to flee some sort of sexual temptation? What did that do for your faith, and how do you think it would have differed, had you given into the temptation?

#5. The key to who you are is whose you are

As the church, we are no longer our own. We have been bought with a price, and so we no longer need to debate on where we stand; we follow and obey Christ in our sexuality. For most of us, this means that we need to lay down some of the sexual desires we have, and flee from all forms of temptation that would draw us into sexuality outside of a marriage covenant. God will give us strength to endure as we choose to obey and glorify him with our bodies.